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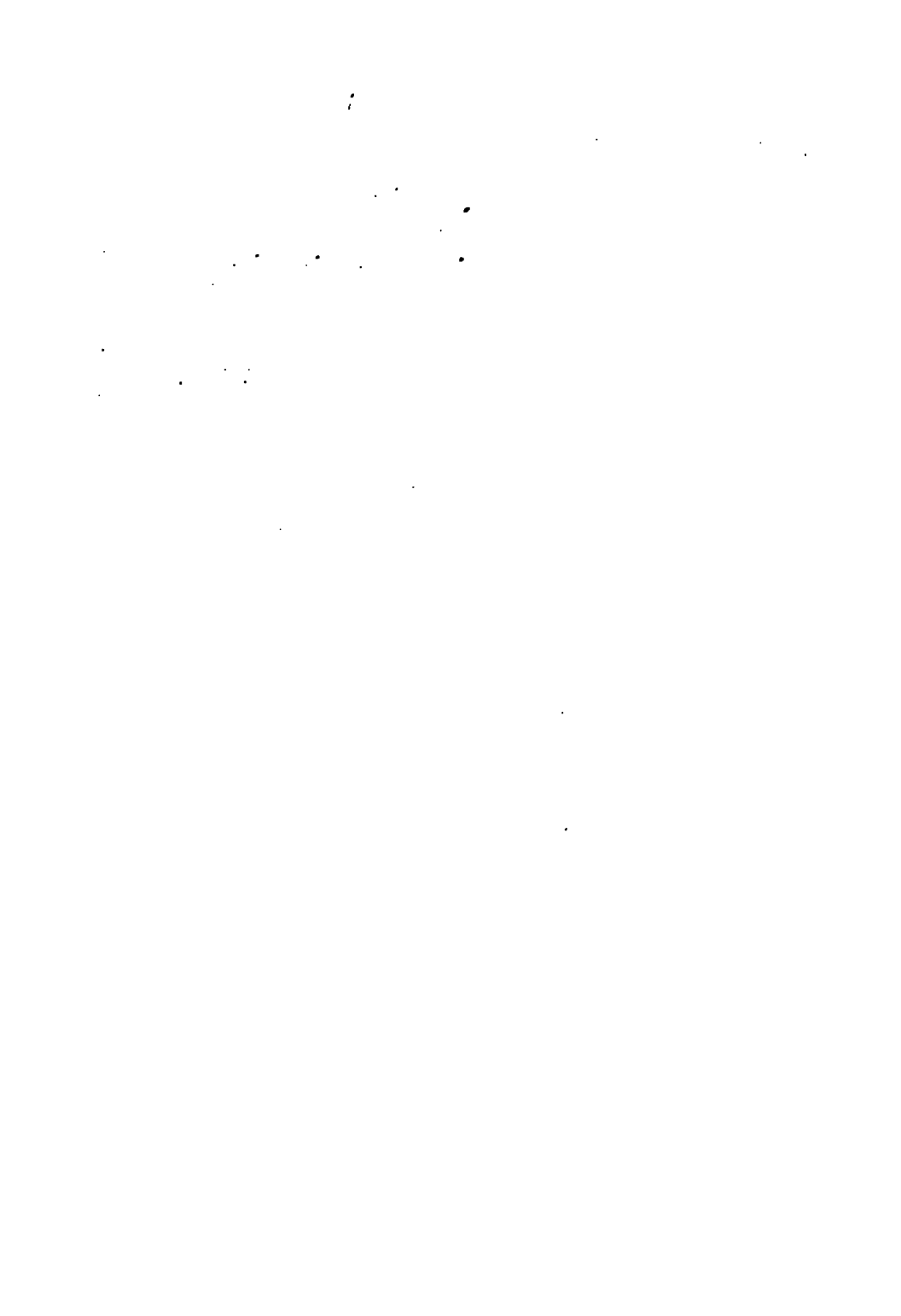
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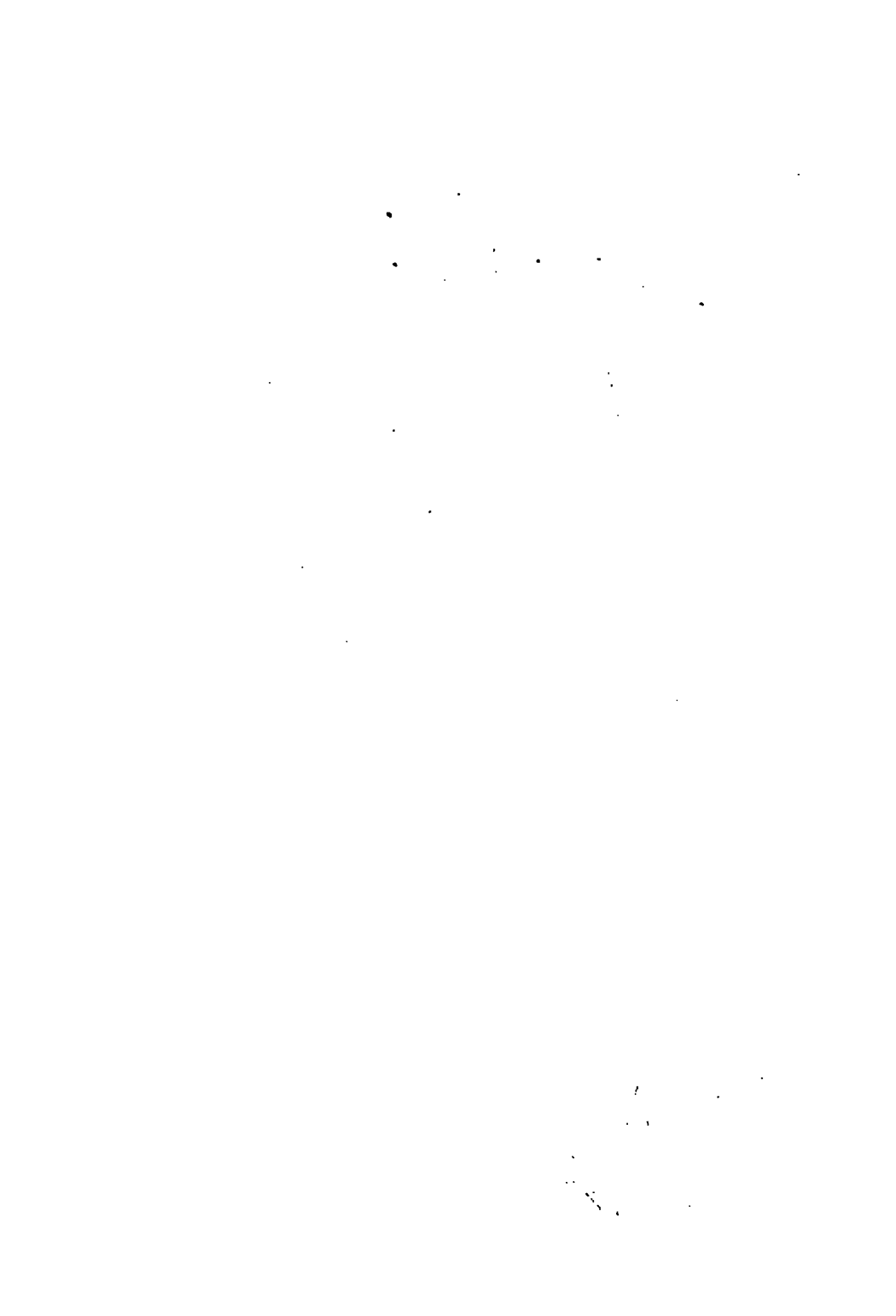
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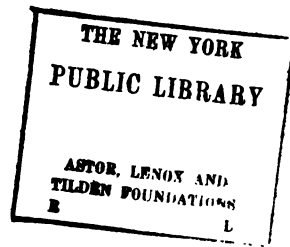




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When "hersilf" appeared at the door, escorted by all the ladies of the tenement, Mrs. Maloney was washing "his" shirt (Page 4)



SARAH ANN

BY
MABEL NELSON THURSTON
I

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
E. C. CASWELL



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1917

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F

To
A LITTLE GIRL NAMED
DOROTHY

F



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1

SARAH ANN

I

INTRODUCING SARAH ANN AND HER FAMILY

TO find Sarah Ann, you take the Stuyvesant Avenue car to Richmond Street, and walk back half a square to Cherry Alley. There is a sign with the name on the corner house, but the sign has been battered by wind and storm till it is almost as dim as the memory of the cherry blossoms themselves, that in distant forgotten years bloomed down the happy country lane which never dreamed a time could come when it would lose its sky and sunshine and sweet flowering spaces, and become a city alley. Perhaps after all, the safer way is to turn off just beyond the tobacco shop with the blue Indian, and then cross the street and go a matter of a few steps to Heintzlemann's bakery, and there you are. That is, if you turn in the narrow paved opening at the left of Heintzlemann's.

However, all this is quite immaterial, because in all the ten years of her life but one person ever did want to find Sarah Ann, and she was a young and zealous truant officer who knew no better. That she failed in her search was due, not to the difficulty of the trail, but to the marvellous efficiency of the system of communication in use in Cherry Alley. The officer stopped to inquire at Mrs. Fogarty's, only three doors from Sarah Ann; yet before she had walked half a dozen rods and climbed two flights of stairs, Sarah Ann had vanished — utterly and unaccountably vanished from the face of the earth. A score of voluble and corroborative ladies sympathetically told the officer so. Sarah Ann used to live there, but she had moved away last week — yesterday, a month ago. Nobody knew where she had gone — “an’ ain’t it the pity now, an’ you such a swate young lady to be afther wantin’ her.” The inevitable inference was that Sarah Ann must have moved in the dead of the night, or, like the goddess in the *Æneid*, vanished into thin air. Cherry Alley, by no means harmonious enough in its ordinary relationships to be in danger of suffering from

J. V. N.

monotony, presented a united front to school authority. The principle was, surrender if you are cornered, but get around them whenever you can. What business had the schools meddling with your children anyway?

Meantime, Mrs. Mullony was draping a red tablecloth with careless art over the wash-bench beneath which Sarah Ann was crouched, with Bobby in her arms. Standing back to view the effect, Mrs. Mullony gave excited instructions.

“Whist now, Sar’ Ann, ye’ll have to scrouge down a bit more, an’ do be tuckin’ in y’r f’t, darlin’. Ye can’t? Wait thin, an’ I’ll slide ye one of me man’s shoes to be tuckin’ it into. Only leave it lay over on its side, carelesslike, like himsilf had kicked it there. That’s grand, Sar’ Ann. But f’r the love of the saints, kape Bobby still —”

The voice of an invisible, but clearly nervous, Sarah Ann, was heard from beneath the tablecloth. The effect was startling; it was as if the wash-bench suddenly spoke in a very different kind of voice from what one would expect a wash-bench to have.

"I'm awful scairt he'll yell! If I only had a sucker f'r him!"

Mrs. Mullony's glance swept the room, and lo, a miracle — no less! On the floor under the window, lay a semi-transparent something, like a bit of green soap pierced by a stick.

"Will ye luk at that now!" she cried. "If Micky Finegan didn't go an' drop his'n when his mother fetched him off, an' it not mor'n half sucked! 'Tis y'r lucky day, Sar' Ann, that's what 'tis, an' no mistake. Stick it in his mouth quick, darlin', f'r I hear hersilf comin' up the stairs."

It was a wonderful performance. When "hersilf" appeared at the door, escorted by all the ladies of the tenement, Mrs. Mullony was washing "his" shirt above Sarah Ann's head, with such splendid energy that the water splashed over and trickled down upon Sarah Ann's thin shoulders, and over Bobby's face. Only the sucker, nobly engaging Bobby's jaws, saved the day. The truant officer being young and new, and, moreover, wholly ignorant of laundry work, supposed the red tablecloth merely awaiting its

turn, and certainly nothing could have been more natural than "his" shoe. As for Mrs. Mullony, wiping her hands upon her apron and coming forward to meet her caller, she was sympathy itself. Moreover, she furnished a new version of Sarah Ann's mysterious disappearance — a rich uncle had suddenly appeared and taken Sarah Ann away with him.

"'Tis grand clo'es she'll be wearin' ivery day of her life," she declared, "an' a kerridge to ride in iverywhere she goes, an' himsilf thinkin' the world an' all of her, such was the way he tuk to Sar' Ann the moment he set eyes on her. An' I doubt," she finished artistically, "I doubt she's in schule this identical mornin'!" At which Mrs. Finegan (returned without Micky), having detected a tremor in Mr. Mullony's shoe, was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and flew into the adjoining bedroom to relieve her feelings.

Five minutes later, Sarah Ann, with Bobby tight in her small arms, crept out from under the wash-bench and peered over the fire-escape at the officer's trim and defeated back. Sarah Ann's eyes were shining with the fire of victory. In

common with the prevailing sentiment of Cherry Alley, she hated school, and deemed it a senseless waste of time.

"Gee, but you done her good, Mis' Mullony," was her tribute. Then with the sigh of regret that we all know at the end of a glorious bit of living,

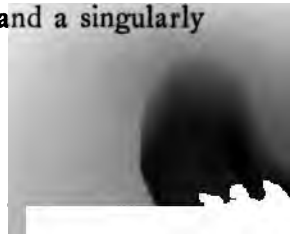
"*Wisht* she'd come back again!"

In the years since the thrilling escape, many things had happened. Sarah Ann's mother, who had been out at a meatshop that morning for a morsel of sausage, because you must have some thing to keep your strength up with, and no use arguing — had died a few months before, leaving Juliana as her only legacy. Sarah Ann did not miss her mother much, partly because she was not the kind of person who ever is missed, and partly because of the supreme joy of Julian (named from a moving-picture heroine highly popular in Cherry Alley).

Bobby was now an impudent little urchin, temporarily balked in forcefulness of speech by shortage of teeth which compelled a lisp. By one of the freaks of nature so baffling to eugenicists

INTRODUCING SARAH ANN 7.


Bobby, born of a limp and neutral mother and a distinctly plain-featured father, was a sturdy little fellow, handsome enough for a cherub — barring the missing teeth. Sarah Ann probably felt Bobby's charm in some dim way, although boys, by virtue of being boys, were not supposed to be possessed of beauty. But although Bobby was hers to be cared for with unfailing devotion at ordinary times, and fiercely defended in adverse circumstances, the whole passion of Sarah Ann's soul was poured out upon Juliana. Perhaps, without consciously reasoning it out, Sarah Ann realised that, when they were boys you couldn't hope to hold them very long; a few brief delirious years of mingled tyranny and adoration, and they were out from under your hand, and you had to sink submissively back into the inferior position assigned to woman in the scheme of things that we call life. Perhaps that had something to do with it. But far deeper than that lay the never-to-be-explained fact of the love that was a law to itself. Juliana had an old weazened, uncanny face, and eyes that were almost crossed; she had tiny claw-like hands, and unpleasant ways, and a singularly



penetrating voice; but to Sarah Ann she was utterly beautiful, the most enviable baby in all the world. Sarah Ann, pitying the mothers of less desirable babies, tried to carry her unaccountable fortune modestly, only revealing it in moments of extreme provocation. At such times she had frequently been told the truth in regard to Juliana, but she never for a moment believed it. She considered it all the invention of jealousy. Sooner or later, after such an encounter, Sarah Ann always "made up" by doing some favour to her assailant. Under her ragged covers at night, while she drew Juliana down on her own sharp little shoulder and cuddled her fiercely, she whispered to her the secret of her weak yielding: "'Cause they ain't none of 'em got a baby like you, Juliana, an' so we're sorry for 'em, an' we're goin' to treat 'em white, an' that's why, ain't it, darlin'est?"

Sarah Ann herself looked so much like a score of other little girls in Cherry Alley, that even the most zealous truant officer would have had difficulty in swearing to her identity. She was stunted and sallow, with shrewd eyes of no particular col-

our, and rough hair of no particular colour either, which showed traces of having been braided somewhere in past ages, but was mostly pulled out, owing to Juliana. She was shabby and dirty, and lamentably ignorant of things a little girl of ten ought to know. She could read a little, her imagination coming cheerfully to the rescue in the matter of words with which she had no ocular acquaintance. She never had heard of the multiplication table, but the grocer or butcher who attempted to overcharge her invariably retired from the conflict in no creditable condition. She had an intimate knowledge of hunger and thirst and hard work and anxieties and responsibilities, but in all the ten years of her life she never had known what it was to pass a day that was not full to the brim of thrilling interest. Everybody would have called Sarah Ann a poor little girl, except the few unaccountable people who would have insisted that she was rich. As for Sarah Ann herself, she was too busy to think whether she was rich or poor; she simply accepted life as it came and lived it to the full. Which, after all, is a method not yet improved upon.



And so it was that Sarah Ann, waking one drizzly morning in response to Juliana's peremptory demand for attendance, walked, all unwittingly, into the Great Day of her life.

II

SARAH ANN STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE AND DRESSES FOR THE PART

ADINGY morning. A chilly, clammy morning with a raw fog creeping stealthily through the streets, and water trickling dismally from the cornices; with the sidewalks black and slimy outside, and the passages almost as dark as night inside; a disagreeable and ill-mannered morning anywhere, but very much easier to get along with up on Van Kleet Avenue, for instance, than down in Cherry Alley. Juliana was wholly within her rights and showed herself a baby of keen perceptions, in objecting to it. It was the kind of a day that made fathers swear and kick things round the room, and made small boys act as though possessed by imps of rebellion; the kind of a day when the stove always smoked and things wouldn't cook, and your neighbours were unpleasantly critical — the kind of day, in short, when

one's soul girds itself for a conflict that will call severely upon its reserves. Sarah Ann's sharp, tired face sharpened a little more.

"It's goin' to be a wallop in' one," she said to Juliana. She was not seeking for sympathy — she was merely stating a well-proved fact. It was a statement immediately justified. From Pop's bed came a sharp command.

"You make that kid shut up, and you do it mighty quick, too, Sar' Ann!"

Sarah Ann clasped Juliana tightly in her arms and twisted around to face Pop. Her eyes flamed with fierce mother-anger.

"Shut up yourself!" she retorted shrilly. "Juliana's cold an' hungry an' she's got a right to cry, an' I ain't goin' to stop her. She wants her sugar-rag!"

"You'd better get it for her mighty quick, then," Pop threatened. "I ain't goin' to stand much more of that."

Sarah Ann was already getting it. It was a rag that had served a long and useful life, and showed it. Perhaps it would be just as well to change the subject. Health officers cannot be ex-

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 13

pected to regulate the details of the lives of Cherry Alley babies. There were times when Juliana herself entered vigorous protest, but Sarah Ann, not being possessed of the secrets of Juliana's soul, did not understand. On this particular morning, there being no warm water yet, Sarah Ann moistened the rag in cold, tied up a little sugar in it, and deftly inserted it in Juliana's wide-open mouth. Juliana's eyes, being tightly shut at the moment in the vigour of her screaming, she was taken by surprise and choked alarmingly. Sarah Ann patted her on the back and implored her with anxious beseechings. Juliana's almost-crossed eyes, the lids red with crying, looked up into Sarah Ann's. Who knows what they read there? Certainly the choking diminished, and Juliana allowed the sugar-rag to be put again into her mouth, and began to suck it between long gasping breaths. Juliana was trying with all a baby's power, to respond to the anguish in Sarah Ann's voice and *please* be good!

With a long sigh of relief, Sarah Ann put Juliana back on the pillow, slipped into her

clothes — a process so swift as hardly to deserve mention — and began to make the fire. It smoked sullenly. Sarah Ann had known that it would. She worked anxiously, expecting every second, further protests from Pop or Juliana, but for the moment there was peace. And presently, grudgingly it is true, but still perceptibly, the fire "took." Again Sarah Ann had conquered.

Juliana first. Sarah Ann opened the window on the fire-escape — a contrivance thoughtfully provided by tenement builders as combined store-house, refrigerator and wardrobe. Then indeed Sarah Ann stood dismayed. Something, a cat perhaps, or possibly a gust of wind tearing sharply around some corner, had upset the bottle of milk. And as if by some uncanny intuition, she knew it, Juliana at the moment of Sarah Ann's discovery, violently rejected the sugar-rag, and began expressing her opinion of life. Undoubtedly this was to be a wallopin' one.

Sarah Ann, in an agony of entreaty, darted into the bedroom, caught up Juliana, and closed the door behind her. Out in the kitchen, she began hushing Juliana, rocking to and fro. Juliana ap-

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 15

proved of the motion and became quieter, but it was an ominous quiet that promised truce only so long as the pleasant motion continued. Plainly, Juliana, this morning, could not be left; there was only one thing to do. Sarah Ann, still hushing Juliana, tiptoed back into the bedroom and bent over her bed, where Bobby's beautiful sturdy little figure lay like some small sleeping prince, and shook him awake with her free hand.

"Bobby," she cried cautiously, "Bobby!"

Bobby opened his eyes, caught a glimpse of the look in Sarah Ann's, and closed them violently.

"Won't neither," he muttered.

"Bobby, you *must*. Juliana's milk got upset an' she's got to have some more. Get up this minute, Bobby!"

Bobby pulled the bedclothes under his chin.

"Won't neither, Tha'rann," he repeated.

"Bobby!"

Silence. Even Juliana held her breath.

"Bobby!" More silence.

"Bobby, you ain't asleep, an' it's no use pretendin'. If you don't get up this minute I'll *mend your pants!*"

Bobby's eyes flew open then. They were blue Irish eyes with bewildering dark lashes; usually they were full of laughter, but now they were black with mingled fear and anger. Bobby knew himself both tricked and helpless.

"They ain't got no holeth, Tha'rann," he declared passionately. "They ain't got no holeth *at all!*"

Sarah Ann presented the inexorability of fate.

"Yes, they is a hole too," she declared firmly. "I saw it yesterday: And it had orter be mended right away, because you know how fast you come through. I ain't decided whether you'll have to wear my dress or jest an apron, but it'll take me a long while to mend. I thought I'd do it to-night after you'd gone to bed, but if you can't go for Juliana's milk —"

Sarah Ann paused, but not for dramatic effect. She knew a better way than that. She crossed the room to the old bureau and began pulling out one of the drawers — a complicated, one-armed performance, due to the necessity of holding Juliana at the same time. Bobby, clinging to hope to the last, sat up in bed and watched her.

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 17


Maybe the drawer would stick and Sarah Ann couldn't open it.

"But that wouldn't make any difference," Sarah Ann answered his thought. "There's an apron behind the door. Only I was goin' to dress you in a cleaner one."

Bobby shivered. It was terrible the way Sarah Ann had of knowing what you were thinking, just as if she took the lid off your head and looked in! He stared with fascinated eyes while Sarah Ann twitched and pulled: finally with a jerk that almost threw Juliana out of her arms, the drawer came open. But Bobby was already on the floor, tugging at a ragged stocking.

"I'm a-goin', Tha'rann," he cried in an agony of fear. "I'm motht ready, Tha'rann. Don't you *thee* I'm motht ready?"

Sarah Ann saw. That is, she saw all that was necessary to see. She sighed unconsciously and her tired eyes softened; men-children of whatever age had to be managed; it was rather pitiful, after all, how easily you could manage them. Sarah Ann turned back to the bureau; but it was not to take out the apron; instead, she fumbled about for



a moment and then slowly drew two nickels from a hidden corner. It was part of a pitiful little hoard saved to buy herself a pair of shoes, but there are emergencies greater than the need of shoes for mothers.

"There's five cents for milk," she said, paying them into Bobby's small hand, "and five for a bit of tripe."

"Oh, Tha'rann, can I have thome? *Can* I, Tha'rann?"

Sarah Ann's thin bosom warmed with joy. The delight of giving a treat flooded her down to the toes poking through the worn shoes. Sarah Ann was a born giver.

"I'll save you a piece back in the fry-pan," she promised. "Run along, Bobby. And be terrible careful that you don't fall coming back."

Bobby, the late unpleasantness forgotten, scuttled down the stairs. Sarah Ann, still quieting Juliana, who held her displeasure like a sword over her slave's head, hurried back and forth, getting breakfast. To be sure, it was not an elaborate meal; it consisted chiefly in setting out stale bread from the closet and butter from the fire-

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 19

escape. But there was coffee to make and tripe to fry. Bobby, returned in safety and the goods delivered intact, hung over the frying-pan till he might almost have been considered an attachment to it, and could only be drawn away by Sarah Ann's warning.

"If Pop sees another piece he'll eat it. You've *got* to let me cover this up an' act like there wasn't nothin' there."

Bobby recognised the wisdom of the argument, and attempted valiantly to follow it after Pop appeared, but to save his life he couldn't keep from turning anxious eyes upon the corner of the stove where the frying-pan guarded its secret. Then came an unexpected trial. Pop, having slept off something of his ill-temper in his last nap, in an unwontedly generous mood, tossed a morsel of tripe on Bobby's plate. Sarah Ann firmly returned it; her ethics were her own, but such as they were, she guarded them jealously.

"Bobby's got enough, Pop," she said. "That's for you —'cause it's cold this mornin'."

Pop took it back promptly. He did not think of offering it to Sarah Ann, nor did she for a

second, entertain any such possibility. But he did not leave her unrewarded, for all.

"You're a smart kid, Sar' Ann — I will say that," Pop declared, and Sarah Ann felt both warmed and fed.

And after all, the day was not so walloping as Sarah Ann expected. It was cold, of course, and Juliana fretted, and Bobby got into a fight and got a black eye, and Mrs. Fogarty was in an ill-humour and made a slighting remark about Juliana (the second remark was cut short in its beginning by Sarah Ann's prompt action in the matter), and there was an unpleasant encounter with the grocer, who refused to throw in a doubtful potato, but, take it all in all, it was not nearly so bad as it might have been. And when Pop came home at night, still in an uncritical mood, Sarah Ann felt that it might even be counted a success.

She was having a delicious time, putting Juliana to bed, when Jake Peters appeared. Jake Peters was something that he himself called a socialist and that the neighbourhood regarded as a "little off," but most of the men agreed with him upon his favourite theme, which was, that the Rich was

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 21

to blame for everything. Sarah Ann never had seen any Rich, but from Jake Peters' descriptions, she pictured them all as fat and red-faced, like Hans Fultz in the saloon on the corner, only a great deal more so. Sarah Ann was not much interested in the subject and gave it slight attention whenever it came up in her hearing. She, too, thought Jake Peters was "off," but for an entirely different reason, namely, that he washed his own clothes, and everybody knew men were no good at washing.

"He'd orter be blued," was Sarah Ann's most frequent comment, when Jake Peters was discussed. She referred, not to Mr. Peters' himself, but to his garments as they hung on his fire-escape, under her critical and appraising eyes.

Sarah Ann, having taken as long as possible to put Juliana to bed, returned to the kitchen, shutting the bedroom door behind her. She had Bobby's pants to mend to-night. She had them under one arm and an old box with a few sewing materials in her hand. Jake Peters' strange, sharp eyes stared at her, first absently, then with sudden purpose.

"Why can't your kid do it?" he asked suddenly. "Get there quicker'n the mail."

"Why I reckon she can," Pop replied, bewildered by the unexpectedness of it. "Sar' Ann's got a level head on her if she ain't much to look at," he added.

Sarah Ann waited. Men were always wanting things done for them. She wished it was Jake's washing, so she could blue it. But Jake was pulling a letter from one pocket and a dime from another. He spoke rapidly, in little jerks, after a queer fashion he had, peering at her with his strange, shining eyes.

"A letter, Sar' Ann. To Daniel Nolan, South Madison Avenue. Stuyvesant Avenue cars and get off at Lincoln Park. Straight through park, opposite entrance. Can you do it? Ten cents carfare and a nickel when you get back."

Sarah Ann's eyes lit with excitement. A nickel and two grand car-rides!

"But I don't know where's Lincoln Park," she said.

"Square place. No houses. Grass — trees

— benches. Conductor will tell you. Ain't got cold feet, have you? ”

“ Cold nothing! ” Sarah Ann retorted indignantly. She felt as if a whole Fourth of July celebration was going off inside her. She was full of fireworks and dancing lights. To be going on a *street car!* Journeys are, like many other joys of life, comparative. There are people in the world, incredible as it may seem, who are actually bored by street cars. To Sarah Ann of Cherry Alley it was as if she had been invited to a trip around the world. She tiptoed into Pop's room and bent over Juliana.

“ I'm going for a ride, darlingest,” she whispered, “ a real ride on the cars. Think of your Sarah Ann goin' on the cars just like Anybody! Oh, I wish I could take you with me! If you were just big enough for to-night! ”

But Juliana, looking as if her dreams disagreed with her, slept on, unresponsive. Sarah Ann leaned over and kissed her.

“ There won't be anybody so lovely as you, darlingest,” she whispered. Then she closed the

door, and, trembling with excitement, stepped out to face Adventure.

She was putting on her ragged jacket when she suddenly paused, darted back into the bedroom, and rummaged in the bureau a moment. Nothing showed when she came back except two spots of colour in her cheeks, and neither of the men noticed that. You can always keep men from noticing things. Sarah Ann did not count that a victory — it was too easy. She stuffed something into the part of her pocket that still kept relations with her jacket, but kept her hand there too, ready for emergencies.

Jake Peters held out a somewhat grimy letter.

"Let's hear your directions, kid," he ordered.

Sarah Ann stood up very straight and repeated in one long ecstatic word:

"DanielnolansouthmadisonavenuegetoffatLincolnparkstraightthroughoppositeentrance."

Jake Peters tossed her the letter and the dime.


"Right y'are! Off with you, Sar'Ann."

Sarah Ann hurried down the stairs. Never before had it fallen to her lot to carry at once three such exciting things, a letter, a dime for carfare

STARTS UPON AN ADVENTURE 25

and the something in her pocket. Why she might even be robbed if anybody knew! The thought sent a delicious quiver down her back. Nobody would have thought of robbing her of the things she had carried all her life hitherto, chiefly potatoes and babies.

Cherry Alley was wide awake and carrying on its own diversified existence. It was a different life from its daytime hours, else Sarah Ann might have been stopped by various ladies with ample time to discuss the destination of travellers; as it was, she passed unchallenged through the house and alley, and out among the crowds on Stuyvesant Avenue. They were noisy crowds, swarming about the pushcart hucksters and into the movie theatres. Usually Sarah Ann would have found excited interest in the scene, but to-night, in comparison with the adventure before her, it seemed as familiar as a gown one had washed and ironed till one knew every seam and "pucker" in it; it is to be feared that Sarah Ann had the makings of a snob in her — as who of us, for that matter, dare say he might not have, given the right temptation?




Sarah Ann cast a keen glance down the street. There was no familiar face in the throngs, so far as she could see; and everybody knows that Adventure means taking chances. The blue Indian offered shelter of a sort — as good, at least, as any in sight. Sarah Ann had already put her dime securely away in the safest place she knew, which happened to be her mouth. In her mouth, it was, so to speak, off her mind. She next tucked the letter in a convenient opening in her sleeve, thus leaving both hands free. Then slowly, after the fashion of one sucking a candy to make it last as long as possible, she drew out of her pocket an old white glove.

It was a number seven glove, and Sarah Ann's scrawny little hands were barely number five. It was out at ends, and buttonless, and so soiled that it was only by intuition that one knew it ever had been white — about as low in fortunes, in short, as a glove well could be; but to Sarah Ann it represented the pinnacle of fashion. Ever since the day Bobby had picked it up and brought it to her, she had cherished it, and dreamed of wearing it some glorious hour. And now, without warning,

the hour had come. Sarah Ann, flattened against the blue Indian's headdress, which decorated his back like a huge fin, slowly pulled on the glove. Once, fascinated, she had watched a lady with very red cheeks and very yellow hair, who for a few days, had fluttered in and out of the second floor back, work on a pair of gloves. Sarah Ann, imitating her, found her fingers slip in with such disconcerting swiftness and occupy so little space, that she had a moment's breathless fear that she had lost one of them in the process. Investigation, however, revealed the fact that they were all intact, only two of them were occupying one berth. Sarah Ann set the matter straight and then, with luxurious airs, she worked the fingers on as she had watched the yellow-haired lady do. The result, viewed as a whole, was slightly disappointing; a handkerchief, Sarah Ann reflected regretfully, would have filled out a lot, or she could have stuffed the finger-ends with paper. But Sarah Ann's unfailing optimism came to the rescue.

"It might ha' been too small," she cheered herself, "or I might ha' had one hand chopped



off, like Joe Pope, an' it might ha' been the wrong hand. An' anyway, this leaves room for growin'."

Sarah Ann held her hand — the gloved one, that is — against her heart, the fingers drooping languidly. This she considered elegant. But a passer-by who called out, "Hi, Glove, where'r ye goin' with that kid?" made her slip it under her jacket. And so doing, Sarah Ann learned a life lesson — that dreams, even when disguised by gloves several sizes too large for you, are not to be revealed to the multitude. Sarah Ann even walked on an extra square, letting one car pass her, because she wanted to hold up the gloved hand to signal with, and did not dare, so near this encounter.

But fate was good to her. The crossing happened to be clear at the moment and the gloved hand stood out in splendid silhouette. Sarah Ann signalled haughtily, as one to whom gloves — and street cars — are as dirt beneath the feet. The great car slowed down obediently; the conductor, his hand upon the rope, called, "All aboard there!" and reached down. Sarah Ann

had a thrilling sensation of being lifted by her elbow and hoisted bodily into Adventure, and then they were off, the lighted, crowded street passing before them like an endless film. Before the conductor came for his fare (pay-as-you-enters had not yet penetrated Stuyvesant Avenue) Sarah Ann had passed the boundaries of the world she knew, and was flying through a strange country. To the ordinary observer there would have seemed little difference between the pushcarts and moving picture theatres and saloons near Cherry Alley and those Sarah Ann was now passing, but Sarah Ann knew better; by a thousand unnamed signs she knew herself Abroad.

“Fare there!” a voice demanded.

Sarah Ann jerked about violently. For one sinking moment she could not find her dime — then she remembered and presented it.

“Wipe it first,” the conductor ordered. He was not fastidious, far from it, but the trip had been monotonous.

Sarah Ann wiped it on the bottom of her skirt and presented it once more.

“’Twas sticky when Jake Peters gave it to me,”

she explained, "but I got most of it licked off."

The conductor dropped the dime down a slot in a little row of tubes that he wore on the front of his vest, where it became visible as another lozenge in a silver roll.

"I s'pose you ain't looking for any change," he remarked carelessly.

Sarah Ann's heart lost a beat and a terror came into her eyes.

"But I've got to get back and I wouldn't know the way to walk," she entreated him. Sarah Ann would not have been concerned over holding her own with a butcher, but conductors were outside her sphere.

"Well, that being the case —" the conductor made reluctant concession. And then he caught sight of the Glove.

"Hello! Accident?" he inquired.

"No, Glove," Sarah Ann replied frigidly.

"You don't say," he retorted grinning.

"Pinch you?"

"Not so's you'd notice it," Sarah Ann replied drily. The conversation was distasteful to her,

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and besides he was robbing her of the moving picture outside.

The conductor took his dismissal in good part, and strolled back to the platform, chuckling to himself. Sarah Ann, with a sigh of relief, twisted around once more to look out. Five minutes later the conductor, still looking back down the street, felt a tug at his coat, and turned to see the Lady of the Glove looking up at him with anxious eyes.

"It's Lincoln Park," Sarah Ann explained. "I've got to get off there, an' I don't know it."

"Sure — glad to accommodate," the conductor replied.

Sarah Ann studied him for a moment.

"You look as if you'd remember pretty well," she acknowledged, "but they all forget sometimes (the third person plural in Sarah Ann's vocabulary, when without definite antecedent, invariably referred to the human species, masculine gender). S'posen I look 'round once in a while and nod at you?"

"I've an idea," the conductor replied gravely, "it would work better if you'd hold up the hand

with the glove. It'd make more impression. So many people nod."

Sarah Ann's keen glance bored into him, suspecting ridicule. He met it with a cheerful friendliness and, after a moment, she surrendered.

"I'll hold it so," she said, illustrating, "like askin' a question."

"I'm on," he agreed. "And you needn't bother for a while. It's a long ways yet."

The child in Sarah Ann, not yet crushed out in spite of her years of care, suddenly leaped up and looked out through her eyes.

"Gee!" she cried ecstatically. "Ain't it *glorious!*"

She went back to her seat and again twisted about, pressing her small nose against the window. There were but few passengers in the car, and they were heavy and indifferent grown people, none of whom noticed her. Sarah Ann and the conductor, for all practical purposes, were taking a sympathetic ride together. Four times Sarah Ann held up her gloved hand and wiggled it interrogatively, and four times the conductor shook his head. She

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was just getting ready to remind him the fifth time when he called out, "Lincoln Park, lady."

The lady scrambled to her feet. She had a feeling that something was due the conductor for his friendliness, but did not know the etiquette of the occasion. This unusual predicament had the effect of making her a shy little girl, and shyness being a sensation with which she had barely a bowing acquaintance, it gave her a feeling as if the foundation of things was giving way — the same as when you lose your first tooth. But she met it nobly — there was no coward in Sarah Ann.

"P-leased to meet you," she stammered. And the conductor responded in kind, "Same here, lady. A mutual pleasure, as it were." Then the warm, lighted, friendly little world flashed along its orbit, and Sarah Ann was left standing on the corner of a strange street with the wide park before her.

And quite suddenly Sarah Ann was afraid — afraid with a terrible smothering fear that seemed like a huge formless awfulness pressing upon her on every side. In the ten crowded years of her life, Sarah Ann had walked among countless piti-

ful and sordid tragedies. She knew almost every form of evil that dwells in crowded places, but never in her life had she known space — wide, dim, silent tree-shadowed places. Darkness in her own tenement she knew; it was not pleasant, but at least one could always touch familiar things, and the familiar touch brought security. In Lincoln Park there was nothing to touch; the few lights only revealed more of the terrible empty spaces. For the first time in her life, Sarah Ann was face to face with nature and terrified by her mystery.

“ Gee! ” Sarah Ann said in a small, quavering voice. “ It looks awful big! ”

But it had to be faced. Sarah Ann’s life, however chaotic to a chance observer, was ruled strictly by law; if a thing had to be done, it had to be, that was all. Sarah Ann, little unseen soldier, with trembling knees and sharp, frightened face, marched into the unknown darkness. Half way through she came to a bench where a man was lopped over, asleep. The sight gave the child sudden comfort. Men she was not afraid of — only great vague emptinesses. She drew a

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long breath and a little of the tenseness relaxed.

"I ain't scairt," Sarah Ann affirmed to her trembling self. "I ain't scairt a *little* bit. But it's awful long."

The soft empty spaces folded behind her; beyond, she could see a dark wall pierced by spots of light — a city block once more; then a yellow brick house with a wall about it. This was the corner of Madison Avenue: Sarah Ann darted into it with the sensation of one who hears his own tongue spoken in a foreign land.

"Geel!" she cried. "It's houses for mine every time, you *bet!*"

Madison Avenue, however, offered little of interest. It was not to be compared for a second with the lights and crowds of Stuyvesant Avenue. Sarah Ann felt both compassionate and scornful over Madison Avenue, and delivered her letter (it was for the chauffeur, but she did not know that) with an air of condescension that completely robbed the butler, who received it, of his powers of speech. He was an imported butler and exceedingly expensive. This accounted for his slowness in taking in the situation, as well as the

he was able to employ, being as it were, a connoisseur in royalty.

" . . . hair like a duchess, if you will believe me. Never 'ave I seen the like in hall my acquaintance. A mere pinch o' rags as you m'y s'y, but she 'anded me the letter with the hair of a duchess! "

The lady with the " hair " of a duchess was standing that moment on the corner of Madison Avenue once more, girding herself for a second plunge into the park. Suddenly she saw, what she had not noticed before, a great building at the corner of the park — a building with wonderful golden windows, and a queer point that went far up into the darkness; and before it, upon both sides of the street and around the corner, were lines of carriages and automobiles. Sarah Ann's sure instinct scented something happening. It was not in Sarah Ann's philosophy of life to miss anything of interest. She answered the call of the golden windows as a flower opens to the sun. Wriggling expertly between the cars she flew across the street — and paused in sheer amazement. The great building was full of

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music — such music as Sarah Ann had never heard in her life before; it felt as if it lifted you and carried you up over the housetops to some great shining place. And before Sarah Ann, from the door of the building, down across the sidewalk clear out to the nearest automobile, lay a wonderful crimson carpet. Sarah Ann was so absorbed in these marvels that she never saw the policemen at all till one of them put his hand on her shoulder. Even then — it showed the condition of mind into which the sight had plunged her — she did not realise for a second that he was a cop.

“ Oh,” she gasped, “ *what is it?* ”

The policeman looked down into Sarah Ann's face. Something that he saw there touched the heart that he usually hid so carefully.

“ It's a wedding, kid — a highbrow wedding. Ever see one? ”

Sarah Ann shook her head. Speech is for ordinary occasions; she had none at all for music that made your heart do all sorts of things, and for a wonderful red carpet that looked so soft you wanted to put your face against it.



"You're right in the nick o' time," the policeman assured her, "and being as you're dressed for it, it's a sort o' pity not to see it. You keep close and I'll give you a look at the bride."

Sarah Ann stood as if grown to the spot. She could not have moved to save her life; had the policeman been like some policemen, and objected to her presence, he must have uprooted her like a plant.

The music grew louder and suddenly seemed to pour all about her — some one had opened the great doors. And then, down the wonderful red carpet came a young lady all in white — shimmering, gleaming, floating, her arms full of flowers, her face — Sarah Ann's very heart stopped at the vision. She clasped her hands over it tightly as though to hold it in.

"Gee," Sarah Ann cried. "Gee, gee, *gee!*"

And then the miracle happened. The White Lady and the little child of the alley for one second stood face to face, eyes searching eyes. Then with a swift impulsive motion the White Lady drew a rose from her flowers and put it into the child's hand. The next second she had stepped

into a car — a flock of laughing girls were running down the church steps — other cars were coming up to the curb — the whole place was thronged with people — people wearing such wonderful gowns as Sarah Ann had never dreamed of in all her life. Sarah Ann was caught in the current, pushed this way and that. She knew nothing of it. In that strange alien world she was utterly alone, with a white rose clutched fast in the preposterous glove, and in her heart the vision that was to shine there all her life.

III

WHAT SARAH ANN FOUND AT THE END OF HER ADVENTURE

TO few people in this world has it been granted to know such an experience as Sarah Ann's ride home. It was a very different conductor this time — a man with a dark sour face who jerked Sarah Ann aboard as if she had been a limp bag of corn. But Sarah Ann never felt the jerk. It was as if he had lifted her among the stars.

It had begun to drizzle now, and before long the car filled with people in damp clothes, and a fat man spilled over on Sarah Ann till she was but a sharp wedge of a child between him and the wall, but Sarah Ann did not feel that either. The rose was safe in her hand and she was conscious of nothing else. Sarah Ann, hungry and ragged, jammed in the crowded ill-smelling car that was

pressing deeper and deeper each moment into the saddest part of the city, was in reality walking down a soft crimson path towards a radiant white vision. Every nerve in her little stunted body was thrilling with ecstasy. Sarah Ann could not guess it, but many of Jake Peters' Rich would have given enough to make Sarah Ann herself rich to the end of her life, to have purchased such an hour. But no market yet has offered them for sale.

Presently Sarah Ann came to and looked about her. Some sub-conscious warning had reached her through her dream; already the car was turning down Harrison Street — in five minutes she would be home. And she dared not let Stuyvesant Avenue nor even Cherry Alley see her rose — there were too many chances of mishap: Sarah Ann knew her world. And there was no way of hiding it in dress or hat without breaking it, and her pocket was not deep enough. Suddenly Sarah Ann's anxious face cleared — the glove, with its long wrist! She could put it carefully inside that and then put the glove itself through the hole in her pocket, holding the rose by its head so that it

should not get broken. Sarah Ann snatched off her glove and carefully thrust the stem down its length, and folded the grimy top about the creamy petals. Then she tried to reach in her pocket, but she could not move. Sarah Ann looked nervously at the mountain that pinned her down. Her voice came from under his elbow.

"If you *please*, sir!"

The mountain started and tried to look around himself, but the attempt was a failure.

"I'm here behind your arm," Sarah Ann explained. "You're too fat to see me. But I've got to get out."

"Why don't you *get* out then?" the mountain retorted irascibly.

"Because you're spilling over on me an' I'm too small. It'll tear my dress."

"Nonsense!" the mountain replied.

Sarah Ann looked out the window. The blue Indian was already in sight.

"If you don't let me out," she said firmly, "I'll *pinch* you. I can pinch somethin' fierce — anybody could tell you that. I'll do you a little one just to show you. Like that."

The mountain started violently, his face purple with rage.

"If you don't get out of here, you brat!" he cried.

But Sarah Ann was already out. She had wriggled free at his first movement. Ordinarily she would have found it difficult to refrain from retort, but she had no thought for mountains just then — she wanted to get home with her dream.

It was not easy, worming her way through the crowds on the avenue, but when she turned into the alley the worst was over, and she drew a breath of relief. At the foot of the dark stairway she stopped and felt her treasure carefully; the splendid stem was unbroken and in the dim flicker of the gaslight the lovely creamy petals shone up at her. Again that overwhelming tide of joy swept the child from head to foot.

"It looks just like *Her*," she breathed.

How long Sarah Ann might have stood there, there is no knowing, but she was startled by heavy stumbling footsteps on the stairs.

"Sam Minnix on a drunk again," she said, after a moment's listening. It was merely state-

ment of a fact. To Sarah Ann, drunkenness had neither moral nor sentimental values; it was simply a disagreeable thing to be accepted like bad weather. She slipped her rose hastily inside her ragged jacket and flattened herself against the wall — not from fear in the least, but from long experience of the uncertainty of their progress when they had taken too much.

Sam Minnix, his young face flushed, lurched to a stop at sight of her.

“What little duck is this?” he inquired thickly. “Ain’t afraid of Sam, are yeh? Sam Min —”

Sarah Ann’s sharp eyes bored into his wandering ones — her small figure was full of scorn.

“No, I *ain’t* scairt of you, Sam Minnix,” she cried tartly. “You ain’t worth bein’ scairt of, floppin’ round like a rag doll. I sh’d think Minnie’d quit you; you wouldn’t catch *me* marryin’ a drunk! Look out round that corner!”

She caught his arm with her free hand and steadied him, Sam mingling protests and complaints. Sarah Ann heard neither, and forgot the matter entirely before she had climbed the next flight. She was thinking about her rose — where,

in the rooms that she called home, she could conceal its loveliness. This so absorbed her that she made absent-minded return to Jake Peters' question, and he had to repeat it.

"Wake up, kid — what's got y'r? I asked if y' found the place all right."

Sarah Ann roused. "Of course," she said, "an' a man took the letter. If you ask me," Sarah Ann declared (alas for the impressions we long to make!), "he was as dumb-looking a bone-head as I ever see. I wouldn't trust him with a pound of potatoes. And he was rigged as foolish as he looked. But he took the letter."

Jake Peters chuckled.

"Ever hear of a butler, kid?"

But Sarah Ann was not to be caught.

"Maybe, an' maybe not, but I know a mutt all right when I see one. Butlers ain't got nothin' to do with *that*," she retorted severely. And having disposed of the subject she hurried into the bedroom. Bobby and Juliana were both asleep. Bobby had kicked himself bare of the dingy blanket, and Sarah Ann pulled it over him with a motherly hand. Then she bent over Juliana.

Juliana was having bad dreams again if one could judge from the faces she was making in her sleep: she was sucking in her lower lip and frowning ferociously. Sarah Ann, drawing the rose from her jacket, put it beside the weazened face.

"Look what Sarah Ann's brought you, darlinest," she whispered.

Juliana did not look; she wrinkled her small face as if to cry, but, changing her mind, yawned instead, and sucked in her breath noisily. Sarah Ann bent over her in ecstasy.

"She was the beautifullest, darling — oh, the very beautifullest! Like snow on the roof, an' the stars, an' the whitest clouds you ever saw; an' there was music an' a red carpet that felt softer'n anything, an' then *She* came. The cop called her a Bride. Oh, Juliana, if you'd seen her — if you only had! She came down the steps all sorter laughin' an' shinin' with a soft white stuff floatin' all round her, an' her arms full of flowers, an' when she saw me she pulled the rose out an' stuck it right in my hand. Think of it, Juliana — a Bride givin' me a flower! She was beautifuller than anything I ever saw in my life except you,

darlingest. Oh, Juliana, if you were only big enough to know just this once! ”

But to that Juliana objected audibly. Hearing Sarah Ann's voice, she knew that it was a time to cry and get taken up. Sarah Ann hushed her in a passion of devotion till even Juliana succumbed and smiled a meagre smile. Dim as the light was Sarah Ann saw it — when had she ever missed one of Juliana's smiles? Her little thin face filled with ecstasy. It was as if Juliana put the final flame of glory upon her day.

“ Oh, *Juliana!* ” she sighed.

Juliana, perhaps repenting the smile, promptly frowned; but she remained quiet. Sarah Ann, touching the rose with reverent fingers, thrust it softly into a broken pitcher behind her bed. Then, hurriedly undressing, she turned out the dim flicker of gas, and creeping in beside Bobby, gathered Juliana into her arms. But it was hours before she finally fell asleep. For to Sarah Ann that night had come the dream which was to be the passionate purpose of all her life.

IV

BUT THE DAY AFTER WAS WALLOPIN'

LIFE, as if grudging dreams, gripped Sarah Ann firmly the next day. Pop's ill-temper, due the morning before, arrived unexpectedly, and breakfast, even from Sarah Ann's point of view, which was not exacting, was a decided failure. Sarah Ann did not even dare steal a single glance at her rose until Pop was out of the house. And of course that was the morning when the coffee boiled over and the potatoes got scorched.

"The way things act, somethin' fierce," as Sarah Ann said to Mrs. Mullony, explaining a situation that everybody understands, "when they start out wrong."

"An' sure they are to keep it up all day," Mrs. Mullony agreed sympathetically. "I've feelin's for ye, Sar' Ann. I know jest how they does."

After Pop was safely out of the way, Sarah Ann hurried into the bedroom to look at her rose. It had spread white wings during the night and was

poised like some great snowy butterfly, upon its splendid stem. Sarah Ann lifted the pitcher to the bureau, and gazed entranced. It looked more like Her than ever, it seemed to the child — like her with the soft white stuff floating all about her.

"*Gee!*" Sarah Ann cried, as she had the night before. And perhaps that was as good as anything, for where is the word that can describe the way you feel when something inside you is so big and wonderful and happy that it almost smothers you?

But Sarah Ann was not allowed her joy many minutes. Bobby was waking, and Bobby must be dealt with. That is to say, he had to be placated while Sarah Ann mended his pants, the prospect of his coming through, to her experienced eye, being too imminent to be trifled with. Sarah Ann took Bobby's indignant remarks upon the subject with unexpected meekness, knowing that she had failed in her duty the night before. Visions and duties not being compatible at the same time.

"You thaïd you'd do it latht night — you *thaïd* tho, Tha'rann," Bobby shouted stormily.

"I know I did, Bobby. But Sarah Ann had to go on a errand, a long, long way."

"*I* wanted to go on a errand, too," Bobby cried, beating a successful noisy tattoo on the foot-board. "I wanted to go an' you never tooked me, Tha'rann!"

"But you were asleep," Sarah Ann explained patiently. "Bobby, stop that — you'll wake Juliana — stop it, I say! If you don't stop (it pricked Sarah Ann's conscience to threaten it, but she had to) — if you don't stop this very minute, I won't mend them till afternoon."

Bobby stopped sulkily. That is, he stopped until he had the necessary garment securely upon his small person; then he "made up." Tired little Sarah Ann, trying to quiet Juliana who woke cross, and violently refused the sugar-rag, turned finally with the desperation of one goaded to the last extremity.

"Bobby Killian," she declared sternly, "if you don't behave an' stop racketing, I'll *send you to school!*"

Bobby stopped in sheer amazement. This was new. He eyed Sarah Ann dubiously; her face was



It had spread white wings during the night and was poised like some great snowy butterfly, upon its splendid stem

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set like a flint, and she began a terrible catalogue of the horrors of school.

"You'll have to sit still without wrigglin' for hours an' hours an' hours. If you wriggle you'll get punished. An' you'll have to study things out of books, an' your head will ache an' your throat will ache, an' your —"

Bobby's round face grew fairly white.

"Tha'rann," he whispered hoarsely. "Oh, Tha'rann!"

"Yes?" Sarah Ann stopped but held sternly to her advantage.

"Tha'rann, *will my tht stomach ache?*"

Sarah Ann looked at him steadily. Her voice was solemn.

"*And your stomach,*" Sarah Ann declared, "*will ache the worst of all.*"

With a howl of fright, Bobby capitulated.

"I'll be good, Tha'rann," frantically making cabalistic signs across his small anatomy. "Croth my heart I will, Tha'rann. Can I go out an' play?"

"You can go," Sarah Ann replied, still stern, "but you'd better not forget."

And Bobby sped as one whom the gods had warned.

The encounter with Tilly Pound was the next event upon Sarah Ann's programme. Sarah Ann — Juliana having fallen into a doze again — ran out to the grocery for a cake of soap and a loaf of bread. At the door she encountered Tilly Pound, also embarked, it appeared, upon a black day.

"An' how's your cross-eyed baby, Sarah Ann?" she inquired.

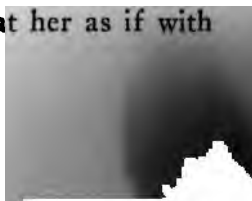
"Say that again," Sarah Ann promptly retorted.

Tilly said it again with more taunting emphasis, dodging as she did so. But though she was quick, Sarah Ann was quicker. Being a woman with a woman's innate disregard for law, Sarah Ann always struck below the belt — or anywhere else that she could "land one." The affair was soon over. Three minutes of whirling fury, punctuated by Sarah Ann's "Take *that*, will yer? An' that — an' *that*," and Tilly, albeit two years older and nearly half taller, withdrew sobbing and vengeful. There would, Sarah Ann realised, be matters to settle afterwards with the house of

Pound, but for the moment she had room only for righteous triumph. Juliana cross-eyed — she'd show 'em! She marched into the grocery, purchased her soap and bread, and started down the alley, her nose in the air, unendurably insulting. Fortunately for Sarah Ann it was an hour when few were on the street, else her manner might have provoked some more formidable antagonist. As it was, she reached home in safety, and at the foot of the stairs her aspect suddenly changed. Instead of triumph, her eyes filled with mingled anger and tenderness; she could not get to Juliana soon enough to comfort her for anybody's thinking such a thing. She rushed through the kitchen, but at the bedroom door she stopped short. Before her, softly gleaming in the dingy room, shone the rose. It seemed to the child as if something white and dazzling and sharp pierced her very heart. What would She think of anybody's fighting, scratching (it was a glorious scratch clear down one of Tilly's cheeks) and even biting —?

"But she said Juliana was cross-eyed," Sarah Ann muttered, "she *did*."

Still the rose seemed to look at her as if with



Her eyes, no longer shining and joyous, but sad and troubled. And suddenly Sarah Ann flung herself down beside Juliana and sobbed and sobbed. Sarah Ann did not know it, but she was learning that great dreams can be bought only by suffering.

It was Juliana who finally stilled Sarah Ann. Juliana was not crying — she was lying curiously limp and still — so still that Sarah Ann, realising with a pang of reproach that she had not yet had her milk, hurried to get it for her. But Juliana did not want any milk, and when Sarah Ann poured a little into her mouth, she did not swallow it. A terrible fear gripped at Sarah Ann's heart, driving out everything else.

"Oh, dearest, do take it," she pleaded. "Do take it for Sarah Ann."

But still Juliana lay limp and unanswering, her small pinched face queer and grey. Clearly this was no case for soothing syrup. Sarah Ann, looking wildly about the disorderly room, caught up an old shawl, wrapped it around Juliana, and hurried down to Mrs. Mullony's.

Mrs. Mullony was big and untidy and quick-

tempered and warm-hearted, and possessed great wisdom by virtue of having had eight, an' six av thim dead, an' none av thim such a care as her man, take it all in all. She looked at Juliana's grey pinched face and pushed her gently back into Sarah Ann's arms.

"It's the dispinsary I'd be takin' her to, Sar' Ann," she said.

Sarah Ann gulped at the fear in her throat before she could ask her question.

"Is — is she very sick, Mis' Mullony?"

"I'd not be sayin' terrible sick, Sar' Ann, but I'm thinkin' ye'd better be gettin' her there to-day. 'Tis miracles they do at the dispinsary, an' that's a fact. I'd let 'em be afther takin' a look at her, Sar' Ann."

"I guess I'd better go an' get her ready," Sarah Ann replied dully.

At the door she turned back, fighting desperately for hope. "She's a 'nawful strong baby, Mis' Mullony, she always has been awful strong."

"The very word I was sayin' to Mrs. Flaherty only yisterday," Mrs. Mullony lied valiantly. "I sez, 'talkin' of strong babies,' I sez, 'look at

Juliana Killian,' I sez. 'Dunno's I ever see a stronger baby f'r her size,' I sez."

"Did you truly?" Sarah Ann pleaded.

"Thim's the very words I sez may the holy saints help me," Mrs. Mullony swore.

Sarah Ann sighed. She didn't believe Mrs. Mullony, but she wanted to believe her, and tried passionately to persuade herself that she did.

"'Cause she really is awful strong," she cried to herself over and over, as she carried Juliana upstairs, and put her on the bed while she made her preparations.

The preparations consisted in washing Juliana's pitiful little best dress and skirt. Nobody at the dispensary should say that her baby was not clean. Sarah Ann scrubbed fiercely, as one defying fate, and then, hanging the things out on the fire-escape to dry, began "doing up" her other work. Suddenly there came a clatter as of falling furniture. It was Bobby coming joyously upstairs.

"Tha'rann, Tha'rann!" he shouted. "They'th a lady cop and I theen her!"

Sarah Ann sprang upon him and landed him in a chair.

"Hush, Bobby. Juliana — Juliana's asleep. An' there ain't a lady cop."

"Yeth there ith. I theen her. The'th got a thtar, but the can't lick folkths cauth the'th a lady."

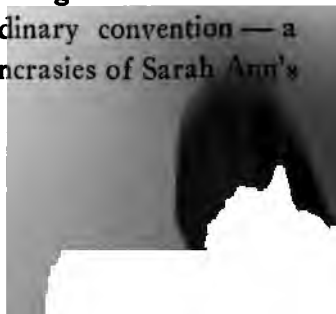
"You've got it mixed up," Sarah Ann said wearily. "Mebbe"—a sudden fear caught her and she looked sharply at Bobby—"she ain't a school officer?"

Bobby shook his head with regretful emphasis.

"No, the ain't—the's a cop, I tell you. Tha'rann, tell me about when we runned away theairt—"

"Not to-day," Sarah Ann interposed hastily. "I've got too much to do. To-night, maybe, if you're a good boy. Now run off for I've got to iron Juliana's dress."

Ironing being an uninteresting and wholly feminine occupation, Bobby consented to retreat. Besides, the yet-unseen star of the lady cop drew him like a magnet. "I'm going to *thee* it," he asserted. He went down one flight of stairs in the manner prescribed by ordinary convention—a concession to certain idiosyncrasies of Sarah Ann's



upon the subject. The second flight he attacked *crescendo* with an effect greatly intensified by the remarks of neighbours above and below; at the bottom of the third flight stood Tim Jessop.

"You don't dass roll down, Bob Killian — you don't dass!" he shouted.

"Yeth I dath, too," Bobby retorted. "I dath anything."

"Sarah Ann wouldn't let you —"

"Huh! I gueth I don't have to mind Tha'r-ann. You clear the way, Tim Jethop," and Bobby, flinging himself upon his stomach, slid, kicked and bumped to the bottom. It was a glorious, terrible, breath-taking progress, inflicting sundry bumps and bruises which Bobby accepted nobly, though they made his eyes water. One must expect to suffer for the glory of being a hero. There was, however, one unforeseen result.

Halfway down Bobby, somehow, got turned over, and Sarah Ann's mending, although of the best as far as intentions were concerned, lacked firmness in the performance. Poor little Sarah Ann!

Upstairs, Sarah Ann was struggling with Juliana's dress. She was not an expert laundress either — few people are, at ten. Juliana's poor little best dress at least testified to the prime article of Sarah Ann's laundry creed; it bore witness to her faith in the matter of blueing.

Mrs. Mullony, stopping her as she passed her door, gazed in dismay.

"My soul, don't it look as if Juliana had run down in streaks on her dress! There now, don't ye mind, Sar' Ann. I dunno but it looks sort of tasty, givin' it a bit o' colour like; it's most as good as ribbons. You say she ain't took her milk yet? I'm thinkin' I'd go right along with her, Sar' Ann. But don't ye be worritin'. Remimber how strong she's been. I dunno's I ever did hear a baby suck her lip louder'n Juliana can when she sets her mind to it. You might tell 'em, Sar' Ann."

"Yes, I will," Sarah Ann said, gratefully.

She pulled Juliana's shawl closer about her small grey face and over the tasty dress. On the step she stopped a moment and looked around for Bobby, but he was not in sight. After all, he was

in small danger — neither automobiles nor wag-gons patronised Cherry Alley, and he never yet had ventured beyond that. The lesser anxiety was submerged in the greater. Sarah Ann shifted Juliana against her thin shoulder and hurried down the alley; it was a long walk to the dispensary and small as Juliana was, she would prove no light weight before Sarah Ann reached it.

“She ain’t heavy a bit,” she told herself. “She’s awful light. I mean”—her fear flaring up at the words—“she’s awful light for such a heavy baby.”

But “awful light ” though she was, Sarah Ann had not gone many squares before her tired arms ached and her tired shoulder sagged. “It ain’t ’cause she’s heavy,” she assured herself valiantly, “it’s ’cause it’s such a long way. I reckon I’ll have to rest jest a minute.”

She dropped down on the nearest doorstep to relieve her arms before going on. A steady stream of people was passing up and down the street but nobody noticed a little girl with a baby in her arms — there were so many such little girls

everywhere, and babies were as common as paving stones. Nobody noticed, that is, except one person. She was rather an odd-looking person to be on Harrison Street. She was neither hurrying nor gossiping, for one thing; and she was dressed differently — neither with apron and shawl like older women, nor in cheap and shabby imitation of prevailing styles like the younger ones; and although there was grey in her hair her face looked young somehow. Oh, altogether a peculiar-looking person to be on Harrison Street; had Sarah Ann been thinking of anything except Juliana, she would have spotted her at once; as it was, she never even saw her till a quiet voice startled her.

“ You look tired, dear. Have you carried the baby far, or do you live here? ”

Then Sarah Ann looked up — up into a pair of keen, wise, compassionate grey eyes — Sarah Ann never had seen eyes like those in her life. They were the eyes God gives to women whom He calls to mother the world, but that of course, Sarah Ann did not know; she only knew — poor little burdened mother who was, all unconsciously, so

crying out for mothering herself — that suddenly she felt this lady would understand.

“It’s Juliana,” she explained. “She — she ain’t eatin’ this mornin’, and I’m takin’ her to the dispensary.”

“Will you let me see her?” the lady asked.

Sarah Ann, without a word, turned back a corner of the shawl.

“Oh!” the lady cried pitifully.

Sarah Ann covered Juliana’s face in one fiercely passionate gesture.

“She ain’t sick,” she cried. “She ain’t! She — she’s often been this way. She’s strong — I tell you she’s the strongest baby I ever saw, and I’ve saw lots of ’em, too. She’s bigger’n Bobby was an’ he’s awful strong. She’s the still kind — they’re most always the strongest. I guess I know!”

Sarah Ann poured it out defiantly, her eyes agonised, entreating, defying, all at once. The lady put a strong tender hand on the child’s shoulder. For one moment, Sarah Ann’s little burdened heart nearly gave way. She did not know that that traitor heart was demanding its own

right — the right to be cared for like the child she was. The next second Sarah Ann shook the hand off violently.

"I ain't a-goin' to cry," she muttered. "There ain't nothin' the matter. Juliana's *strong*, I tell you."

The tenderness in the kind eyes deepened.

"Where were you taking her, dear?"

"S'. Luke's," Sarah Ann answered grudgingly.

"St. Luke's! And you were going to walk?"

Sarah Ann nodded. "Wings ain't stylish," she said shortly.

A firm hand fairly lifted the tired child. Sarah Ann felt as if something strong and safe was holding her up. Comforted, she could not have told why, and unresisting, she obeyed its pressure as it guided her through the crowd to the corner; but when the lady signalled a car Sarah Ann awoke.

"I — I ain't got no money," she gasped.

The tender eyes smiled down at her. "But I have. That's what I'm for, you know, to help little girls and babies. I know a doctor at St. Luke's, and I am going with you to tell him about Juliana. Maybe I can help you to understand

about the things he will tell you to do for her."

"I'm going to do everything," Sarah Ann cried jealously. "Juliana wouldn't take nothin' from nobody but me — not *nobody*."

"Yes, dear, I know," the lady said gently.

They rode on in silence after that, Sarah Ann holding Juliana tightly, her sharp eyes frightened and unseeing. She had forgotten that she was having a ride for only the fifth time in her whole life; the streets were no moving picture show. Alone in all the world, save for that strong and tender hand, Sarah Ann sat fighting her awful Fear. Only when the lady said quietly, "We get off here, dear," did she falter.

"I — I'm afraid," she gasped.

The lady looked straight down into the frightened eyes.

"You wouldn't let Juliana feel you afraid, would you?" she said. "Little babies feel so many things, even though they cannot talk."

Sarah Ann's trembling chin steadied, and her tired little back stiffened; her eyes, full of tears, looked pleadingly at her new friend.

"She — she won't feel's if I'm afraid now,

will she?" she implored. "I ain't scairt a mite. I — I ain't no 'fraid-cat."

For the first time the lady looked quickly away; it was only for a minute, then she was smiling confidently at Sarah Ann.

"Of course you are not," she told her, "and I am sure that Juliana knows. This is St. Luke's. Have you been here before?"

Sarah Ann nodded. "Before ma died — when Bobby was sick."

"They may want to take Juliana for a few minutes — to weigh her, and one or two things like that. They will not hurt her. You will remember and not make a fuss?"

Sarah Ann nodded again, this time mutely. Then the big white door opened before them.

Of the next hour Sarah Ann never could remember more than a confused dream of agony.

The doctors and nurses were very kind. She did not know that it was a very unusual thing to let a little girl of ten stay with her baby through all the examination; she never dreamed how her friend was making things easy for her in a score of ways. She sat with her hands tightly clenched,

her eyes never leaving the doctors' faces except once. Then Juliana cried — a weak sick cry. Sarah Ann leaped to her feet, but even before her friend could speak, she dropped back again, gripping the sides of her chair. "I — I'm rememberin'," she gasped.

Her friend put her arm about the child's rigid shoulders.

"It's almost over," she said. "You can have Juliana in a moment. Only we'll have to wait while I find out about her food and things. But you won't mind that, I know."

"No'm," Sarah Ann answered dully.

It was a long moment, but Sarah Ann, with Juliana safe in her arms once more, did not mind that — did not indeed, realise time at all. She rose silently when her new friend reappeared, and followed her to the car, and still silently sat through the ride. As they left the car she lifted her eyes for an instant.

"Did — did they fix her?" she asked.

"Fix her? You mean Juliana?"

Sarah Ann nodded.

"There was nothing to fix, dear. She needs

different food; and she needs to be kept out of doors as much as you can — all wrapped up, you know. I am coming home with you to show you about the food."

Sarah Ann accepted the statement silently: she was too absorbed in her anxiety to realise any strangeness in it; besides, in the world she knew, people helped each other as a matter of course. She led the way up the stairs to the dark rooms. The lady made a queer sound, instantly suppressed, when she saw them. But she said nothing about that — only put on some water to heat, and began hunting for a saucepan. It was a very grimy one that she finally found.

"Is this the only one you have?" she asked.

"They's another. It leaks — I stick a rag in," Sarah Ann replied.

The lady turned quickly away. "I'm going to get something," she said. "I'll be back by the time the water is hot."

She was true to her word. She reappeared fifteen minutes later with her arms full of bundles — a saucepan, a small dishpan, mop, wiping towels. Sarah Ann's eyes grew big with amazement as she

saw the display. It is safe to say that she never had seen so many things new at once in any home in Cherry Alley in all her experience. Her terrified mind leaped to the only explanation she could think of. "Is it for a wake?" she gasped.

"A wake?" the lady repeated puzzled. Then suddenly she understood, and gathered the little terrified figure in her warm arms.

"You poor little *child!*" she cried. "No, indeed, it is for no wake. These are things to use in making Juliana well. Little babies have to be taken care of so carefully, dear — we have to keep everything just as clean! Dirt makes them sick. That's why I bought these new things. Do you think you can take care of them and keep them clean for Juliana?"

"I didn't know — it's awful hard to keep 'em clean," Sarah Ann faltered. "Sometimes I scrub and scrub. But mostly," she added honestly, "I just slick 'em. It seems 's if there ain't time for things."

"You do it all?"

"Why sure — there ain't no one else," Sarah Ann replied in surprise. "Bobby's too little, an'

Pop's a man, an' anyways you don't want 'em mussin' round."

"How long is it," the lady asked in a curious voice, "since you went to school?"


"Oh, years," Sarah Ann responded in careless contempt. She stole a look at the lady's back. Dare she tell her? Not yet, she decided. Sarah Ann's wisdom matched her experience, not her years. But she could safely report public opinion.

"Schools is rotten. They don't learn you nothin' 'ceptin' books."

The lady was opening a bottle from the dispensary.

"Come here, Sarah Ann. I want to show you how to fix the baby's food. Now watch me carefully. First, you measure a spoonful, so —"

Sarah Ann watched, her keen eyes following every motion. When it was ready she took Juliana up and fed her carefully, as her friend showed her. It was a long process; Juliana at first resisted, so that Sarah Ann by herself, would have given up in despair, but when she looked up in her new friend's face, she saw to her surprise, that there was no give-up there.



"Just be patient — don't hurry her," she told her. "She must take it, Sarah Ann." So Sarah Ann, heartened unaccountably, turned again to the fight.

It was nearly an hour before they conquered. But at last, Juliana surrendered. Sarah Ann looked up, her tired eyes shining with the wonder of victory.

"I — I thought she wasn't goin' to," she confessed. "It was you that made her. I wish't I knew your name."

Her new friend was leaning down, studying Juliana's inscrutable face.

"There's a name I'd like to be called by," she said slowly. "I'd like you to tell people what it is if they say anything about me. I so want to help — anywhere — when anybody is in trouble. I'd like to be called the Friend of Cherry Alley."

And suddenly, as she rose, Sarah Ann caught a gleam of something under her jacket. It was a silver star.

V

IN WHICH SARAH ANN MAKES COOKIES; AND CONFESSES HER DREAM

BUT the friend of Cherry Alley had already received her name and could not overtake it. Half-provoked and half-amused, she realised that it was not for her to accept or to reject; she was the Lady Cop.

However, as the weeks passed, slowly — very slowly in some cases — she began to win her kingdom. As she went with frightened or sullen boys to the Juvenile Court, or hunted nearly all one dark night for pretty wild Jenny Corey, bringing her home at last, terrified but safe; as she got a nurse to come every day and do things for old Mrs. O'Brien, and helped Peggy Dimmick through the hard time after her husband went off — as she did these and many other things, interweaving her life with the troubles of Cherry Alley, slowly but

surely, she won her place in the hearts of her people.

But there were certain other things, yet undone, that troubled her. Patience was a painfully acquired virtue with the Lady Cop. It was her nature to want a thing done at once — the moment she saw the need of its being done. And many things took so long! There was the matter of Bobby's education for instance. The skill it had taken first to get around Sarah Ann (which was finally accomplished by drawing from her her ambition for Bobby, and making her understand that a political boss would have to know how to read and "do sums"), then to land Bobby himself in school and hold him there until school got hold of him, would have qualified the Lady Cop for a diplomatic position of high responsibility. There remained the problem, as yet entirely untouched, of Sarah Ann herself. The Lady Cop was thinking about it so hard that there was almost a line in her forehead, although there shouldn't have been any because she was getting ready for a party.

There had been a good many such parties by this time. Sarah Ann and Juliana presently pre-

senting themselves in the doorway, wore the air of old-time guests. The Lady Cop had her back turned at the moment (her door nearly always stood open) and did not see them until they came into view upon the opposite side of the table. Juliana was better — much better than upon the day of their meeting, but her face, although no longer grey, was still old; it always would be. As the two grave faces appeared above the edge of the table, it would have been difficult at first glance to tell whether Sarah Ann was holding the baby or the baby holding Sarah Ann.

"We're here," Sarah Ann announced. Juliana looked bored as if the announcement were superfluous, as indeed it was.

"Why, so you are," the Lady Cop replied. "Put Juliana down on the couch, Sarah Ann, and then you can help me cut out the cookies."

Sarah Ann's eyes lit with pleasure. She really looked like a little girl at the moment. With an assurance evidently born of long practice, she undid Juliana (she had been wound in an old shawl which gave her the appearance of a large brown cocoon), deposited her upon the couch,

backed up a chair to keep her from rolling off, put a big pillow at her feet to check any possible draft, and then presented herself for confession. Her eyes had become anxious.

"They's one morning," Sarah Ann confessed, "when I didn't wash 'em real clean. Mrs. Mullony was up. She said it was finicky."

"But you remember what I told you about little babies and dirt."

"Yes'm," Sarah Ann answered. "That's why I only pretended to feed Juliana out of the dirty one. After Mrs. Mullony went I scrubbed an' scrubbed. But there ain't any use," Sarah Ann explained out of the depths of her wisdom, "in rilin' folks when you can get around 'em."

The Lady Cop was looking at the child with an expression of humorous bewilderment. It was a common expression these days — it might almost be said to be her Sarah Ann expression. The Lady Cop was teaching Sarah Ann a great many things, but Sarah Ann was one of her leading instructors in that arduous course in patience. Sarah Ann, however, did not see the expression; she was swinging uneasily from one foot to the

other; it was evident that there was more to follow.

"Oncest," said Sarah Ann in a low voice, "oncest —"

"Yes?" the Lady Cop encouraged her.

"I didn't wash it on purpose. It looked awful clean. And they was such lots to do." She lifted entreating eyes. "It didn't hurt her," she pleaded. "She — she almost laughed."

"Oh, Sarah Ann!" The lady's voice was full of dismay.

"But it didn't hurt her," Sarah Ann declared passionately. "I reckon I'd know, wouldn't I? It *didn't*, I tell you!"

"Not this time, perhaps — that is where you were fortunate. But you never can tell, Sarah Ann; you have to be so careful with little babies."

Sarah Ann drew a long breath; the worst was over now.

"Yes'm. I kept thinkin' an' thinkin' after I'd gone to bed. I couldn't sleep somethin' fierce. So then," Sarah Ann looked up, eager for approval, "I *got up an' washed it in the dark.*"

"In the *dark!*" the Lady Cop exclaimed. "Why, how in the world, Sarah Ann?"

"Yes'm," Sarah Ann reaffirmed cheerfully, her small body trembling with eagerness, her eyes adoring, pleading, like a dog's. "Yes'm, right spang in the dark. 'Cause I couldn't sleep some-thin' fierce. I could do it with my fingers, you know."

The Lady Cop struggled valiantly, but the foe within — her own treacherous sense of humour — was too much for her. She laughed till her eyes were wet. Sarah Ann never laughed, but she brightened like a flower in the sunlight. She adored seeing the Lady Cop laugh — none of the people she knew did it like that. Sarah Ann's spirits mounted to the dizzy joy of one who has achieved a success.

The Lady Cop, her eyes still mirthful, drew the little figure into her arms.

"I couldn't help laughing," she told her, "but, dear, I want you to promise me something. You must always wash Juliana's dishes in the light, so that you can see."

"Yes'm. That's why I didn't use a dishcloth," Sarah Ann assured her earnestly, "'cause I can feel it better with my fingers."


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"But we don't want to wash dishes with our fingers. Don't you understand, dear?"

Sarah Ann sighed resignedly. "Seems as if there's too much things in some places and not enough in others. That dishcloth would make two handkerchiefs."

The Lady Cop rose suddenly. (Patience — patience, dear Lady Cop!) She gave Sarah Ann a final little hug (carefully keeping her face turned away), and pushed her gently towards the bathroom. "Those cookies are waiting, dear," she said; "run and get ready."

Sarah Ann disappeared in the bathroom whence promptly issued sounds of splashing — emerging presently very damp and shiny, with her hair plastered away from her forehead and braided in two tight braids. The Lady Cop was very particular about hair; it was one of her foibles in which Sarah Ann patiently humoured her. Sarah Ann presented herself for inspection, and that passed, flew to the cookies. To see Sarah Ann cutting out party cookies was to see her for a few moments the child she should have been. Such a rolling up of sleeves from her skinny little arms! Such an



adjustment of apron! Such importance in rolling out the dough and cutting out the cookies, and sprinkling them with cinnamon and sugar and putting a raisin in the exact centre of each! Such breathless intensity in the flouring of the pan and putting them in so that they should not run together! Then, the party swallowed up in the oven and the dishes washed (with dishcloths), and the table set with a plate for Bobby as well as Juliana (Bobby, who sometimes was brought, but generally sneaked away from, owing to an incurable defect in his manners which caused him always to centre his interest exclusively upon the cookies), there still remained five minutes before the cookies could be looked at. Sarah Ann did not fidget, but her eyes were fastened to the clock like a needle to a magnet, and conversation languished seriously. The moment the minute hand touched the longed-for goal she was on her feet.

“Now?” she asked.

“Now,” the Lady Cop nodded. “Remember the holder, Sarah Ann.”

Sarah Ann dropped her hand guiltily from her

skirt — she had not yet become accustomed to considering a dress merely as clothing, and not as also combining various household utilities — and snatched up the holder. She opened the door softly and peeked in with a very tiptoe of carefulness — as if Juliana were in there asleep. An intoxicating odour of sugar and spice floated out; she wrinkled her nose in ecstasy.

“Oh, come, look!” she cried. “They’re all puffed up like cushions. They’re the fattest we ever did. *Are* they done?”

“Done just exactly right,” the Lady Cop assured her. “Take them out, Sarah Ann.”

Sarah Ann drew them out reverently. It was a big pan — nearly as big as Juliana would have been had she been square, and it strained Sarah Ann’s skinny wrists with a sort of aching rapture, but the Lady Cop, who understood a great many valuable things about life, did not offer to help. She smiled with complete understanding when Sarah Ann, her burden safely landed, rubbed her wrists and gave vent to her superlative expression of joy.

“*Gee!*” Sarah Ann cried joyously.



“Those,” the Lady Cop assured her, “are what we might call a Success, Sarah Ann.”

“Can we,” Sarah Ann almost whispered in her excitement, “can we have It warm?” It — like that,— in Sarah Ann’s vocabulary, meant the Party. Parties were wonderful things, even when taken out of the cooky jar a day or two old, but the very superlative essence of a Party was to eat it warm. And this was to be a warm Party.

Sarah Ann sighed again in sheer ecstasy. She nearly burnt her fingers a dozen times in testing their heat (the Lady Cop always insisted upon the test being made upon the pan rather than the Party), but at last they were cooled enough. Sarah Ann, tiptoeing to do greater reverence to the occasion, set them forth — two for each, including Juliana and Bobby. Then she flew across to Juliana.

To the ignorant observer, Juliana might have seemed a kill-joy, evincing as she did, not the slightest interest in anything except the refreshment she had brought with her — her own thumbs. Juliana always preferred thumbs as handy to get at, never choking or disagreeing with you after-


wards, never getting lost and being eminently durable. Juliana, a silent and unsociable soul, took the comfort in her thumbs that a man takes in his pipe. The flavour suited her, the sucking was a pleasant and soothing occupation, conducive to meditation.

Sarah Ann, seating herself at the table with Juliana in her arms, was conscious of a film of regret blurring her joy for a moment.

"I wish Juliana'd grow up," she sighed, "so she could do more things."

A time would come when Sarah Ann would cry to keep her little, but she was not far enough from babyhood herself, counted by the calendar, to have reached that place.

Sarah Ann and the Lady Cop ate their cookies — slowly, to make them last. Then Sarah Ann divided Juliana's, one going to Bobby's portion, and the other — because her hostess said she really couldn't — not another crumb — to Sarah Ann's. Juliana, sucking her thumb, ignored the Party as beneath her notice. Sarah Ann, having held her breath over the last crumbs in order to keep the flavour as long as possible, resigned her-



self to the inevitable, and turned happily to the next thing. The next thing was a question that she had been waiting to ask for a long time. She asked it without preface, looking earnestly across the empty party dishes at her friend.

"What," Sarah Ann asked, "do you have to do so's to be a Bride?"

The Lady Cop was startled. Accustomed as she had become to adventures in Sarah Ann's mind, this found her entirely unprepared.

"Why," she hesitated, "it takes two people to make a bride, dear — there has to be a bridegroom, too."

"What's it?" Sarah Ann asked eagerly.

"Why, the man — the man that the bride marries."

"Oh, is it *marryin'*?" Sarah Ann's voice was a mixture of scorn and enlightenment. The next moment she was sure of her ground once more.

"Why, it can't be jest marryin'," she declared. "I've seen lots of 'em married, but they ain't none of 'em Brides — not ever. And the cop said this one was."

"Tell me about her, dear."

Sarah Ann's eyes grew soft and shining with the memory.

"It was over on Madison Avenue. I'd carried a letter from Jake Peters to a mutt he called a butler, an' I was goin' back to the car when I saw the big building all lighted up inside, an' the carriages an' everything, an' I ran acrost. And they was red carpet comin' out of the building an' goin' clear acrost the sidewalk down to the street, an' they was music too — great big soft music that made your throat feel queer, an' made you feel like cryin' 'cause it was like you was bein' lifted up and carried to some lovely place. An' a cop ast me did I want to see the Bride, so I waited an' in a minute — *She* came." Sarah Ann's little heart was beating excitedly and she struggled for words to tell it.

"She — She was all white an' shining with soft white stuff flyin' round her, an' Her arms were full of flowers, an' She was sort o' laughin' an' so beautiful — I didn't s'pose anybody looked like Her ever! An' when She come to me she stopped an' looked at me all shiny, an' then — She *give me a rose!*"

Across the table the Lady Cop's warm hand closed over Sarah Ann's.

"That was very, very lovely, dear. I think I understand now. And you would like to grow up and be a bride?"

Sarah Ann looked at her almost aghast. Never before had her friend failed her so.

"Oh, no," she cried; "oh, *no!* Not me, but Juliana."

VI

THE LADY COP ALMOST DID IT — AND THEN WEAKLY GAVE UP

IT broke upon the Lady Cop in one dizzying, blinding flash of light in the moment of silence that followed. At last, she had found the secret door in the wall of Sarah Ann's prejudices. Juliana, unresponsive, self-sufficient Juliana, should be her ally. The Lady Cop leaned forward excitedly — as has been hinted, she was not yet a proper clock-work Lady Cop — and her voice was full of the singing notes the child so loved to hear.

Unconsciously, Sarah Ann sat straight and eager too: such wonderful things were apt to happen when the Lady Cop looked like that!

"So Juliana is to be a Bride?" the Lady Cop said, her eyes all starry.

Sarah Ann nodded. "With shiny white stuff all around her," she supplemented.

The Lady Cop nodded in her turn. "Oh,

surely the shiny white stuff," she agreed. "But, Sarah Ann, it takes a long time to make a Bride like that. She will have to learn ever and ever so many things."

"But Juliana's awful bright," Sarah Ann cried eagerly. "She's the brightest baby I ever saw. She knows heaps of things already."

Instinctively the Lady Cop glanced at Juliana's inscrutable face and her heart acknowledged the justice of the statement; Juliana looked as if she possessed the knowledge of the ages, and thought it pretty poor stuff at best. She returned the Lady Cop's gaze with an unwinking and unembarrassed stare as if challenging her to deny her wisdom. The Lady Cop found herself agreeing hastily — almost apologetically.

"I am sure that Juliana is very bright. And there will be plenty of time for her to learn; but do you know who is going to be her greatest teacher?"

"Who?" Sarah Ann asked jealously, immediately adding, "She won't like her as much as me. She won't *ever* like *nobody* as much as me!"

The Lady Cop smiled.

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"But you are the one I mean, dear," she said.

Sarah Ann started so that she nearly dropped Juliana.

"Me!" she cried. "*Me!* I ain't no teacher."

"But you will be — to Juliana. She will copy you in everything as she grows older. That is why, Sarah Ann" — the Lady Cop's eyes were very tender but a little anxious too, behind their tenderness — "that is why you will have to go to school yourself — so as to be able to help Juliana."

She had been afraid of an explosion, but none came. Sarah Ann simply looked at her in incredulous bewilderment.

"But I couldn't," she cried. "Why, there wouldn't be anybody to take care of Juliana."

The Lady Cop went around the table and knelt beside Sarah Ann's chair, gathering the two of them in her strong arms.

"Listen, dear," she said. "There is a lovely place where they would take care of Juliana all day — a bright sunny place where there are nurses who know all about caring for little babies. You

could take her there on your way to school, and get her as you go home, and —”

She broke off in dismay, for Sarah Ann was trembling violently, and her face was so white that it frightened her friend.

“They couldn’t anybody take care of Juliana but me!” she cried passionately. “They couldn’t — they couldn’t! She’d get sick without me. When Mrs. Mullony tried to do things for her she cried an’ cried. She knows me, I tell you, an’ she doesn’t want anybody else. She wouldn’t let anybody else. I guess I know — I —”

The Lady Cop gathered the sobbing child close.

“Hush, dear, hush,” she cried. “You will frighten Juliana. Juliana won’t be taken away from you — I promise you that; and we won’t talk about it any more. There, see — you’ve frightened Juliana!”

Juliana was indeed beginning to cry, doing it with a vigorous determination which argued well for her future persistence. It took ten minutes to quiet her — a fact for which the Lady Cop was grateful. Once indeed, a whimsical fancy crossed her mind that Juliana understood, and was

dealing with the situation in an extremely capable fashion. The only question was — what was Juliana crying about — because she wanted to go to the nursery, or because she didn't want to? At all events, her intervention saved the day. When Sarah Ann finally succeeded in quieting her, she had become quiet herself, only a certain wariness remaining as evidence of the storm. The Lady Cop went to the closet for a bag and put in it Bobby's party and a generous supply besides. She helped wind Juliana in her brown cocoon, and Sarah Ann in her ragged jacket. She did these things as she acknowledged to herself, with the eagerness of one suffering from a guilty conscience; and yet she knew that if she had been wrong anywhere it was in her promise to Sarah Ann.

Sarah Ann accepted the bag, then "did her manners" with careful propriety. "Thank you for the Party," Sarah Ann said. "It — it was a real nice Party."

"And you won't worry about anything, Sarah Ann?"

"No'm, I won't," Sarah Ann responded.

But though she held up her face for her kiss she did not smile, and there was about her an air of being still on guard. It was that wariness that pierced the Lady Cop to the heart.

VII

AND SARAH ANN BECOMES HAUNTED

IT took days, even weeks, to banish it entirely, and perhaps it could not have been accomplished even then, except for one fortunate event. Christmas was coming.

Christmas was coming up town. The great stores were advertising it from their windows and their crowded aisles. The sidewalks where scores of new venders appeared, and mechanical toys darted about on the curbs, were publishing it; the street cars announced it, having "Shop early" signs like postage stamps stuck upon their fenders; the great markets declared it with their glowing pyramids of fruit and the scent of Christmas greens. Most of all the crowds proclaimed it—the endless stream of package-laden people that poured through certain streets and in and out of the stores all day, finally at six o'clock, trickling off in little rivulets

down scores of quieter by-ways. Down on Stuyvesant Avenue even, there were a few rumours of Christmas, but it was a dingy and a shabby and listless Christmas, very different from the gay and excited one up town. Hans Fultz decorated his saloon with Christmas greens; they were the only greens for many squares, but a few of the stores did put up festoons of red and green tissue paper. Cherry Alley and its neighbours regarded them indifferently which could hardly be counted to their discredit. Otto Heintzlemann, the German baker, did indeed achieve a marvel in the way of a cake, but although the younger population of Stuyvesant Avenue flattened its nose against the window, the general verdict was that it was a very secondary performance compared with the wedding cake decorated with two icing figures under an icing bell, which, upon other occasions held the place of honour. So altogether Stuyvesant Avenue paid scant attention to Christmas. Which was the reason that Sarah Ann made but indifferent response when the Lady Cop spoke of it one day.

"It's when Heintzlemann takes his white cake in to clean it off," she said, this being the most

popular explanation of the retirement of the wedding cake.

"When *what?*" the Lady Cop asked.

"The wedding cake. It gets sort o' spotty, you know, so he takes it in an' takes off the figures and does a new white over it. We don't think much of it," Sarah Ann explained tolerantly.

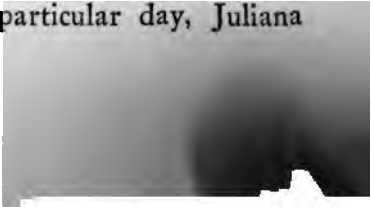
"But that isn't Christmas," the Lady Cop gasped.

"Oh, yes'm, it is." Sarah Ann was polite but firm. "That's when he always does it. It says so on it in red letters."

"Sarah Ann," the Lady Cop cried, "didn't you ever have a Christmas present? Didn't you ever hear what Christmas *means?*"

"No'm, I don't guess I did."

Sarah Ann was sitting in her favourite chair — one with a velvet cushion. It was too high for her, and her thin legs dangled uncomfortably, but she always insisted upon occupying it when Juliana could be put on the couch. She never explained why, but it was because she could pretend she was a queen. She knew all about queens from the movies. Upon this particular day, Juliana



was unusually complacent and Bobby, full to repletion, had fallen asleep upon the floor where, his long lashes brushing his softly-flushed cheeks he looked beautiful enough to break a mother's heart. So Sarah Ann was having a wonderful hour, and wearing the air of lofty dignity that so puzzled her friend at times; the Lady Cop had not connected it with the chair. She never dreamed that, dearly though Sarah Ann loved her, there were moments when she longed to see her bow at her feet, and say,

“Hail, O Queen!”

Instead, the Lady Cop looked at her one long incredulous moment, then she said, “Sarah Ann, come right here this moment,” and Sarah Ann, suddenly traitor to her own sovereignty, slipped down from her throne, and ran across the room to the Lady Cop's chair. Once before the lady had spoken in that kind of voice, and she had taken Sarah Ann up in her arms. Sarah Ann never forgot things. She waited, her face full of excitement. Would she — ever — again? And when her friend put her strong arms about her and lifted the child to her lap, Sarah Ann sat there

still — almost holding her breath in the wonder of it. She did not guess that what made her feel so wonderful and all lighted up inside, was because real queens do not sit on thrones at all — they sit pressed close against some mother-heart with mother-arms folded close about them. So folded in, Sarah Ann heard the Christmas story, and how, because of God's great gift, people who love, on one wonderful Day, give gifts bearing His name.

Sarah Ann drew a long breath at the end. "He was like me an' Juliana," she said. "No he wasn't. I wouldn't give Juliana to nobody." Sarah Ann's eyes grew deep at the thought. "Gee, I don't see how He *could!*"

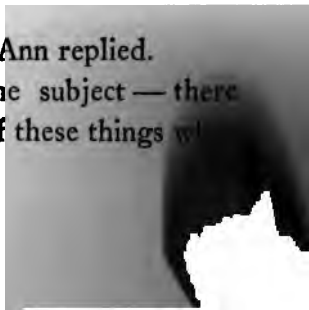
"Nobody can understand — not the wisest person that ever lived," the Lady Cop said. And then she waited, letting Sarah Ann think it over.

"You're sure it ain't a lie?" Sarah Ann asked doubtfully, after a while.

"Very sure, dear."

"It sure is a one-er," Sarah Ann replied.

The Lady Cop changed the subject — there would be time enough to talk of these things w



Sarah Ann's mind had gotten used to the miracle. For the present she would let it lie in silence. There was meanwhile another aspect of the matter.

"Sarah Ann, you never gave anybody a Christmas present?"

Sarah Ann shook her head in perplexity. Christmas presents were not known in Cherry Alley.

"Would you like to? Would you like to earn some money and buy Christmas presents for Bobby and Juliana?"

Sarah Ann tore herself from the encircling arms. She didn't mean to — it was as if some spring inside her went off suddenly and whirled her about.

"And Pop and Mrs. Mullony an' Jake Peters an' Jimmy an' Jenny an'—"

"I'm afraid little girls couldn't earn money enough for all of those," the Lady Cop interrupted, "but you might send each of them a pretty card with Merry Christmas on it, and then for Bobby—"

"He wants an ottermobile," Sarah Ann de-

clared, "an' some more gum. His'n is awful dirty. 'R else an all-day-sucker, only they don't last so long."

"Maybe Bobby would better wait for the automobile till he's bigger. Don't you think he'd like a ball? A ball and an orange and some candy?"

Sarah Ann accepted the amendment cheerfully.

"Yes'm, I reckon he would. An' Juliana can have a dress with pink ribbons — they was one in Rube Bernstein's window!"

"Or a soft cap to wear out in the cold and a warm cloak, Sarah Ann," the Lady Cop tactfully suggested. "Don't you think she'd like that, Sarah Ann?"

"But she could have pink ribbons? Juliana would look lovely in pink," Sarah Ann clung persistently to the main article in her creed.

"She could have a pink bow on her cap," the Lady Cop suggested discreetly. "That would be very pretty."

Sarah Ann pressed her hands over her small bony chest. "It — it sort o' catches you in here," she explained. Then suddenly her hands

fell and her whole small figure drooped as if mortally smitten.

"But I ain't got no money," she faltered.

"I was thinking about that." Indeed the Lady Cop was planning madly.

"You see I am so busy, Sarah Ann, that I don't get time to do a great many things that need to be done. Like dusting my rooms, for instance. And—" the Lady Cop's voice was carefully colourless—"like carrying Mrs. Janny's baby to the nursery and bringing it back at four o'clock. I think if you would do those things for me, I could pay you ten cents a day."

"But Juliana—when I carried the other baby," Sarah Ann protested anxiously. "Seems like I couldn't manage two."

"No, dear, of course not. But couldn't you leave Juliana with Mrs. Mullony for that little while? It would take only about fifteen minutes each time, you see."

"Why, yes'm, I reckon I could—'cept when Mis' Mullony's put out about something. She ain't pleasant when she's put out," Sarah Ann explained.

"I understand. Well, those times you could put Juliana on the bed and pile things all around so that she couldn't fall out, and leave your door wide open and tell somebody as you go down stairs, in case she cried very loud — don't you think so? As it wouldn't be often that you'd have to leave her —"

Sarah Ann's face flashed into joy.

"Oh, can I begin to-morrow?" she pleaded.

Promptly at quarter before nine Sarah Ann presented herself. Mrs. Mullony had not been put out and was "kapin' an' eye" on Juliana. She was heartily sympathetic and congratulatory over the plan.

"Sure an' Juliana's the wan fer bringin' luck, the crathur," she cried. "I said it the moment I set eyes on her wid her fists all doubled up an' stuffed into her mouth-like. An' the look in the eyes of her, like she knowed it all! She sure will be a lucky wan, Sar' Ann."

"I'm going to buy her a hood with pink ribbons for Christmas," Sarah Ann declared joyously.

"An' a piccher she'll be in it," Mrs. Mullony

responded. "Pink sure is the colour fer the knowin' ones."

Sarah Ann almost danced as she hurried down the alley; it would be many years before Juliana could be a Bride, but the joy of the pink ribboned hood was close — so close that her eager fingers could almost touch it already. There were only twenty-two days, the Lady Cop said, before Christmas. Sarah Ann actually hopped in her joy, and then stopped, shame-faced, because none of the mothers in Cherry Alley ever hopped.

The Lady Cop was waiting for her and the two set off together to Mrs. Janny's. There was no difficulty with Mrs. Janny: she had had too many children, poor soul, to be at all particular who relieved her of the care of them. Besides, Sarah Ann was distinctly capable in her way of handling the baby. She eyed him critically as she took him up.

"He's pretty thin, isn't he?" she said. "But then," hastily, lest she should have hurt Mrs. Janny's feelings, "the thin ones usually turn out fine."

"Fat nor thin, it's all one to me," Mrs. Janny

responded dismally. "I ain't countin' on his turnin' out anything."

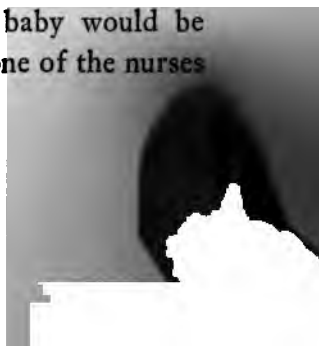
Sarah Ann turned fiercely. "You ain't deservin' to have him," she cried. "Talkin' that way about your very own baby!"

"Wait till you've had nine," Mrs. Janny responded without offence.

Sarah Ann wrapped the baby with a sort of stern tenderness, her loyalty to Juliana — as though she were wronging her to love any other baby — warring with her mother-heart. She petted it surreptitiously as she went down the street beside the Lady Cop. The lady herself was absorbed in thoughts of her own, and not inclined to talk, and Sarah Ann, engrossed in the baby, did not notice her friend's silent study of her; and so, together they reached the nursery.

"This way, Sarah Ann," her friend said.

Sarah Ann followed to the office where she handed over the baby and received a check for him. Then the Lady Cop asked her if she wouldn't like to see where the baby would be kept all day, and with a word to one of the nurses



she led the way into a big spotless sunny room with little white beds all around the walls.

"My, ain't it white!" Sarah Ann exclaimed involuntarily.

The Lady Cop said nothing: she waited silently observant, while Sarah Ann looked about the room. She knew that Sarah Ann's keen eyes which never missed anything, were taking in a score of details. Usually the babies would have demanded Sarah Ann imperiously, but for once she scarcely noticed their presence. She was studying, with a sharp pain she did not understand, those tiny white beds.

It was her friend who had to break the silence when they were outside again.

"It's nice there, isn't it?" she said cheerfully. "The baby will be so much better there than at Mrs. Janny's. It's all so clean and light, and the nurses take such beautiful care of them."

"Juliana wouldn't like it," Sarah Ann retorted fiercely. "She *wouldn't* — she wants me. She cares lots more about me'n about any old nurses an' things."

"I wasn't talking about Juliana. I was talk-

ing about Mrs. Janny's baby," the Lady Cop said.

Sarah Ann shot a sharp sidelong glance at her — the old wary look back again. The Lady Cop stopped. "I have to go in here. Stop on your way back, Sarah Ann, and I'll give you your ten cents — the first ten cents towards Juliana's pink ribbon."

Sarah Ann did smile then — a small half-dubious smile, but the Lady Cop counted it a victory.

After her friend left her however, Sarah Ann fell into a brown study; she missed many things along the way, and made but absent-minded recognition of Mrs. Mullony's kindness when she stopped for Juliana on the way up-stairs. At the door of her own rooms Sarah Ann stood still, a hot anger slowly welling up in her heart. The darkness and dinginess of the place itself, and the confusion of poor little Sarah Ann's housekeeping, all contracting so vividly with the brightness and immaculate order of the place where she had left Mrs. Janny's baby, were too much for her.

"I hate that place — hate it — *hate* it!" she cried, stamping her foot in her anger. Then sud-

denly she threw herself down on the bed beside Juliana and sobbed and sobbed. She did not know what she was crying about; she only knew that she felt utterly wretched, and things were all twisted up, somehow.

Presently she went over to the bureau, and taking out the old glove, unrolled the drying flower within. Usually the rose was a magic talisman transporting her instantly to a place of beautiful dreams, but upon this black morning that too failed her. The memory of the white and shining vision fitted strangely into that white room where the babies were cared for. She fought the thing with a sort of fierce sullenness.

"They ain't got nothin' to do with Brides," she muttered. "They *ain't!* Bet you anything She never seen a nursery. They're for poor babies, that's what they're for; they ain't for people like Brides, or — or Juliana. They ain't. I guess they *ain't!*"

She rolled the rose up again and thrust it, almost roughly, back into the drawer. Then she put a kettleful of water on the stove and, while that was heating, piled the furniture out of the

way. She fell upon the table and chairs as though she were charging an enemy, and when the water was hot, scrubbed till every bone in her tired body ached. But she could not scrub away the enemy; which was not strange because, although she could not guess it — poor little Sarah Ann! — it was securely entrenched within her own soul.

When at last the scrubbing was done, she pulled things back and surveyed the result. Except for the smell of wet boards there was no change apparent; the dark and crowded room looked no more like that bright and sunny place where the babies were cuddled down than a city alley looks like a country lane. Again that hot anger swept the child.

“ I don't care,” she cried. “ It was awful bare. I like rooms with things in 'em and so does Juliana. Old walls without any pitchers — that's what *they* was!” and Sarah Ann scowled at the ragged and dingy newspaper cuttings that decorated their walls.

That afternoon when Sarah Ann went for the Janny baby, she refused to look in the nursery, nor would she for the week following. She even

shut her eyes if the door happened to stand open, and she always hurried down the steps as though the nursery were pursuing her. That, in fact, was precisely what it did do, a silent white ghost of a nursery floating softly beside her wherever she went. A hundred times a day she saw it — the golden mat of sunlight on the floor — the row of little white beds — the way the corner of a white spread hung down — the empty crib that looked as if it were waiting for Juliana.

One thing only saved her from actually becoming ill — her joy in the little pile of dimes that was accumulating in a corner of her drawer, carefully knotted in a ragged handkerchief which began its duties clean, but soon showed signs of hard service. Sarah Ann counted the dimes a dozen times a day, and at least once a day, she went by Bernstein's to keep watch of the baby caps in the window. Fortunately for Sarah Ann's peace of mind, Bernstein's was not inoculated by any new-fangled ideas about the art of window decoration. Goods reposed in Bernstein's window until they were sold, or until old age — which develops early on Stuyvesant Avenue — invalidated them into

boxes under the counter. But old age, even on Stuyvesant Avenue, hardly comes on in three weeks in December when there are no flies. And when she had eight dimes, Sarah Ann bought the cap and had five cents left over.

VIII

IN WHICH WE VISIT VAN KLEET AVENUE WHERE
THINGS SHOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY, BUT
WERE REALLY VERY MISERABLE INDEED

THE sun which always hurried by Cherry Alley, merely looking in in the briefest possible fashion, as we are all apt to do in the matter of unpleasant duties, always seemed to linger as long as possible about a certain house up on Van Kleet Avenue. It wasn't at all strange; it was a beautiful house to look into, and perhaps the most beautiful room in it was the dining-room with its wide windows to the south and east. It was a room of noble proportions and charming colouring, and the sun lingered over many lovely things — window-boxes full of ferns — delicate porcelain and beautiful silver — the bowl of sweet peas in the centre of the table. And the mistress of the house behind the coffee-urn was the most exquisite thing of all — lovely with that fragile

loveliness that seems always on the verge of floating away upon gossamer wings. In her violet grey gown with its soft laces and touch of faint rose, she might have been the spirit of the sweet peas before her.

Except — It is pitiful to have to note exceptions. Those who loved Eleanor Riverton best tried not to think about them. It was not strange that she had been spoiled all her life.

Upon this December morning, the beautiful face was full of grieved petulance, and the voice had a sting beneath its sweetness.

“ I’m bored to death being married. I didn’t ever suppose it would be like this.”

The young fellow at the other side of the table did not move, but something about him seemed to tighten.

“ Bored how, Eleanor? ” he asked quietly.

“ Just *bored*. There aren’t two kinds of being bored — it always feels the same way. I thought,” here a quiver broke through, “ I thought we were going to have such good times being married. I didn’t dream you’d be all wrapped up in your old business like this. I don’t

mean going to things. I mean about me. Why sometimes you act as if you didn't know I was in the room!"

He was young and very much in love, and hadn't been married very long — all of which things explain why he didn't know any better.

"Dear!" he cried earnestly. Then a maid came in with waffles and he had to stop. He began again when she left the room, but with a feeling that somehow he was beginning farther away and that the three minutes' interruption had somehow put a great distance between him and Eleanor. His voice sounded doubtful to himself, and yet *how* he cared!

"Listen, dear. I've tried so hard to explain it and I thought you understood. It's the hard times, dear — we've been running at a loss for three months, and Lawrence wants to lay off half the force this week. I'm fighting it. I'll hold out for a while yet but I don't know how long. It's a stiff fight, dear, and that's why I am absorbed sometimes. If you could only understand!"

The lovely mouth quivered now. "Nobody but you ever called me stupid," she said.

WE VISIT VAN KLEET AVENUE 111

"Called you *stupid!*" he cried, bewildered.

"You said I couldn't understand. If that isn't being stupid I don't know what is."

"Eleanor, you know I didn't mean that. You couldn't understand, dear — nobody could — without seeing the awful suffering. The look in the eyes of one man we laid off last week has haunted me ever since. I've got to hunt him up to-day. I can't stand it."

"And you want to make me miserable too!"

"Make you *miserable!*" He seemed driven to idiotic repetitions — he was conscious of it himself. But this was all so hard.

"But you know I can't stand seeing people suffer and you want me to understand." Eleanor felt a thrill of pleasure at her own logic. She was sure that must convince him. She was unprepared for the sudden light in his eyes — that flashing power that always compelled her in spite of herself.

"Dear, do you mean it? Would you really like to understand — to help? It means suffering — yes, I know it — but somehow that is the only way to stand the pain of it; to go down and

take part of the pain of others. Nobody who does that ever can be — bored.”

Eleanor shrank back. She felt frightened, bewildered, almost betrayed. He had no right to ask things like that of her — nobody ever had before — nobody but Frances Armstrong and she always was different. What would her people say? Why she couldn't *stand* it — everybody knew she couldn't. Her indignation was real; the fear and bewilderment came in the queer way he made her feel — as if he expected something of her that nobody ever had before.

“I — I'm sure I've done what I could,” she protested. “Somebody came up here yesterday and I gave her fifty dollars. I don't see what more you could want.”

The brightness went out of his face as quickly as it had come. He pushed back his chair and went around the table to her.

“Yes, dear,” he said, gently. “I know that you give very generously. Be patient, if you can, little girl — things may look up in a few weeks — we are hoping for it. And I'll try to be more considerate, dear. I know it's dull for you. Would

you like to go to the Lafayette to-night? I'll stop for tickets on the way down."

Poor boy — it was all so exactly the wrong thing, every word of it, and he didn't know it. It left the little sweet pea girl with all the honours in her hand, feeling herself virtuous and wronged. She kissed him good-bye gravely and would not smile. She said she did not think she cared about going to the Lafayette. She was completely and utterly victorious, and sent him off as puzzled and bewildered as heart could wish, and she should have been triumphant, but to her surprise, she was as miserable as he; because, you see, in spite of everything, she loved him better than she ever had loved anybody except herself in her whole life. It was only a weak little love yet, far down in her soul, but it was trying very hard to grow, and growing always means pain somewhere. Perhaps it wasn't strange that the little sweet pea girl was puzzled and angry and frightened all at once. She never had suffered before and she didn't know what it meant.

After her husband had gone she wandered restlessly about the house for a while, but she only

grew more and more miserable. So she ordered her car to go shopping; there wasn't anything she wanted, but she might possibly happen upon something. But the shops were in conspiracy with the day; they offered her only the same old things that she had seen a thousand times before, and she turned petulantly away, and gave James the order — The Academy. The Water Colour was on there. Eleanor did not care anything about pictures, but one was expected to go, and it might as well be now as any other time. She was really very miserable indeed.

She bought a catalogue at the desk, but didn't open it, as she strayed disconsolately through the rooms. She decided that it was the poorest exhibition the Academy ever had had. And then, at last, as she turned a corner to another gallery, the day brightened. An alert little figure in blue, flashing about the room, spied her and flew to meet her. Eleanor had spied her at the same moment and they met half way.

“Eleanor Riverton! How in creation —”

“Cicily Byrd, what in the world ——”

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Then they began to explain in the same breath.

"I was bored to death, and one has to drop in sometime, you know —"

"I really couldn't spare a moment, but one is expected to see them —"

They broke into laughter.

"Aren't they a bore?" Eleanor confided.

"Awful," Cicily responded. "My way is to pick out one in each gallery — the one that catches my eye first — and not look at the others. Then if people talk, you can take the conversation by the hand and lead it gently and firmly to your picture. If you do it the right way, you can make people think you really know a great deal about it."

Eleanor sparkled with delight. "I'll try it," she declared.

"Take a colour-note," Cicily advised her. "Nobody will discover you, and it's easy."

"A colour-note?" Eleanor's pretty brows questioned her.

"Blue and yellow or something — it saves time. Only steer clear of artists."

"I always do," Eleanor agreed gaily. "They're so narrow, you know. What are you doing now, Cicily?"

"A thousand things. A week-end at Cynwyd — the Assembly course; the reception to Kalousky; the dinner to three hundred little slummies —" She broke off suddenly. "Eleanor Riverton, you are exactly the person I need! — It was positively providential, our meeting here — and I had thought it was an absolute waste of time to come when nobody would be here — only I couldn't get a moment any other time. But I've just got to have you — say that you will. It's a hold-up — your money or your life!"

"Either or both," Eleanor retorted promptly. "Only, if you wouldn't mind, I should like to know what it's all about."

"Why, that Christmas dinner to the little slummies, of course. Three hundred of 'em. We've been through the South End with a drag-net. Turkey and ice-cream, and two great trees with a present for everybody. Of course, it won't actually be Christmas — it will be two days before — they'll never know the difference. You must see



*"You shall be a fairy lady and
distribute the gifts"*

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them eat — and hear them! You'll have the time of your life!"

"Am I to understand that you want me as turkey or plum pudding?" Eleanor inquired, dimpling.

Cicily gave her a little shake, but absent-mindedly, her expression absorbed.

"Goose! Wait a moment — it's coming! Now I have it! You shall be a fairy lady and distribute the gifts. Wear your white and silver — there's a dear. The little slummies' eyes will almost pop out of their heads — you'll see. And you needn't touch them. There'll be a dozen on the floor to distribute, and half a dozen to scramble for the gifts under the trees. All you'll have to do will be to stand around and be gazed at."

"Such a tribute to my intellect," Eleanor murmured.

Cicily shook her again — she might almost be said to have shaken her with a measuring eye, so critically was she studying her.

"Nonsense, Eleanor — your intellect's all right, if you needed it. You never have, that's all. Yes, that white and silver and your loveliest ai-

grette — if any of those kiddies ever heard of angels they will straightway put them in the second rank. Nobody ever heard of an angel so sparkly as you will be! You'll have the time of your life, Eleanor Riverton — you see if you don't! ”

Eleanor's lovely eyes misted suddenly.

“ Take me,” she cried impatiently, “ take me this minute! I've been having a perfectly horrid time lately with Richard all wrapped up in his old business. I'd do anything to have a real good time for once.”

Cicily's dark eyes glanced at her keenly.

“ It's hard times, you know, Eleanor. I reckon he sees things he can't forget. Frances Armstrong was telling me some. I ran away. She would have made me utterly miserable in ten minutes. But I'm the delightedest that you'll come. Have you got your car? Let yours follow and come in mine, and we'll go right down to the committee.”

And so it was that, all unknowing the Bride started on the road that led to Sarah Ann.

IX

CONCERNING CANDY — FAIRLY PURE, ACCORDING
TO STATISTICS; AND SOULS, ABOUT WHICH
THERE ARE NO STATISTICS

ELEANOR had supposed that the committee meeting would be at the Woman's Club, but it was not. Cicily ran by the Club without a glance, and plunged into the current of traffic that swirled about Newspaper Row, then turned sharply into one of the down-town streets devoted to wholesale dealers in teas and coffees and feathers and metals and leathers. She stopped before a big building through whose empty uncurtained ground-floor windows, Eleanor could see crowds of women gathered in busy groups. Eleanor never had seen a committee like that; it seemed to her that there must be hundreds of women there. And many of them were so queer-looking, and so very very queerly dressed. They were making candy-bags and filling them, and dressing dolls, and wrapping gifts, and going

over lists of names and lists of groceries and chattering — *how* they were chattering!

Cicily stood in the doorway a moment, an odd smile in her dark eyes.

“Feel lost?” she asked, and then, without waiting for an answer, “That’s some committee, I tell you! They’ve been working like this for ten days. They come from all the churches and no church at all. That pretty girl with the black hair thinks she’s an anarchist, and the one working with her is Bishop Fales’ daughter. That little cripple lives in a tenement round the corner. They are planning for ten celebrations in different parts of the city. They are all working like mad, and tired to death, and wouldn’t stop for anything in the world. Want to back out?”

Eleanor’s pretty lips set doggedly. “Of course not,” she declared. “I’m not a *baby*.”

Cicily looked at her reflectively.

“What can you do? Ribbons and laces suit you best; can you dress dolls?”

Eleanor shook her head, a flush of humiliation deepening her lovely colour, but her grit meeting the challenge.

"No, I can't! Try again."

"You never ran a hotel so you can't come in on dinner-planning. It looks like filling candy bags or wrapping presents."


"I'll take the candy," Eleanor declared.

Cicily took her across the room, working their way through the many groups to the corner where a barrel of candy and piles of candy bags and stockings were being consolidated. Cicily was tactful. Several of the group were society women, and nobody was shabby. She introduced Eleanor all around, and then left her, but though she did not seem to do so, she was watching. In an hour she went across to her.

"I've got to go down to the hall and take some measurements," she said. "Want to come with me?" She felt a prick of conscience when she saw the tired face — such a wilted little sweet pea girl! Had she been wrong? Was Eleanor really not able to stand things?

"I think I — will," Eleanor answered with a quiver in her voice.

She recovered her spirit however, when they were in the car again.



"The idea of calling that stuff *candy!*" she cried. "I wouldn't give it to my cook!"

"Probably not," Cicily returned. "I certainly wouldn't advise you to if you want to keep your cook. But you must remember that you are not judging by Van Kleet Avenue standards. The supreme recommendation for candy in this part of the world is its staying power. We actually considered all-day-suckers, but we were beaten by a pure food lady who drowned us with a flood of figures proving that although we could get fairly pure broken candy, the composition of all-day-suckers was a mystery, and she had a profound inward conviction that it was chiefly glue. Inasmuch as none of the rest of us could follow her figures, we had to surrender. I've rather come around to her point of view since — not because of the figures nor the hypothetical glue, but because the sight of three hundred children all-day-sucking at once, would be overwhelming. I prefer to get broken into it by degrees — What's the matter, lady mine?"

"Are you sure," Eleanor asked hesitatingly, "that you are going the right way?"

"Right as a trivet. I've only been down here a score or so times already; the car could go by itself. Don't be frightened. I'm broadening your mind, my dear."

"I don't *like* having my mind broadened," Eleanor protested whimsically. "I like things that my senses like — nice things to hear and see and smell!"

"Most of us do," Cicily retorted, "except the saints. You can't keep them away from it. There are two kinds of saints — the fighting kind that streets like this just make fighting *mad*, and the pitying kind that break their hearts over them. The best variety is a blend of the two, like Frances Armstrong."

"Frances Armstrong! Is she down here?"

"You bet your life she is," Cicily replied, inelegant but forceful. "Police court work — wearing herself out, soul and body, and declaring she wouldn't change places with any woman in the world. What's the matter, child?"

"Nothing but Frances. I might have known she was behind it. She always is, when I get into things I hate."



"But she hasn't a thing in the world to do with it — with your coming, I mean!" Cicily cried in amazement.

"Oh, hasn't she! That's all you know, Cicily Byrd! It's fate, that's what it is. It always has been so since I was a new girl at boarding-school, and she a senior, and she persuaded me to give half my allowance for, something or other, I forget what. But I know I was awfully pinched all the last term. And then I cried my eyes out when she graduated. That's the way Frances Armstrong does you! Touches your life a moment and then flies off, leaving you feeling wretched and utterly deserted, and about as big as a pin, which isn't fair when you couldn't keep up if your soul depended on it!"

Cicily looked at the lovely flushed face with a sort of surprised consideration.

"She does make you feel like that — that kind always does. That little black-haired girl that thinks she's an anarchist, does. Time and again she's given away the last penny she had in the world to help some one in trouble."

"Don't!" Eleanor cried sharply. "*Don't*, I tell you!" Then she laughed. "That candy got on my nerves," she explained. "I think I'll try wrapping presents next time."


"I think I'm a fool," Cicily declared shortly.

Eleanor looked at her in astonishment.

"*You*, Cicily Byrd! When you left the rest of us out of sight without half trying!"

"Out of sight, *nothing!*" Cicily retorted. "I'm talking about life, not school-books. As if algebra and chemistry weren't the worst kind of waste of time if you never learn to apply them to life. Talk about efficiency! Who but a down-right idiot would set an artist to scrubbing floors! I'm ashamed of myself, Eleanor. Your part in life is to give people something lovely to look at. Go home and plan your shining princess costume — you shan't come down here again until that night. Richard never would forgive me, and I shouldn't forgive him if he did."

"Indeed I am coming too," Eleanor replied. "And Richard hasn't anything to do with it, so now!"



It was their little-girl formula of unalterable decision. Cicily laughed in spite of herself, and then grew thoughtful.

"Maybe I'd just be going from one muddle into another," she confessed. "I expect I'd better keep hands off and be done with it. Your candy be upon your own head, Eleanor Riverton!"

They had reached the hall then, and Cicily led the way up a flight of dirty stairs, Eleanor following, her pretty face full of distaste. The hall upstairs was equally dirty, but larger than she had expected, with a good-sized platform.

"A tree on each side of it," Cicily explained, "and a barricade of candy across the front. Beautiful Lady enters left wing, advances to centre, and sheds radiance upon the multitude. Be sure to wear your shiniest things, Eleanor — they'll adore them so. That gown with the silver sequins. You'll become a legend to be passed down to future generations."

"Which pair of wings would you advise?" Eleanor inquired saucily.

"You can't fool me — they have to grow and yours haven't sprouted yet. But wait till you see

what you do to those children! There now, stop talking and let me get to work. We want to squeeze in three more tables. If we put seven down this side —”

Eleanor stood watching her. Cicily was absorbed now, arranging and rearranging imaginary tables.

“Fortunately they’re always thin, these poor little alley kiddies,” she said absently. “That saves us some room. If it were your pampered Van Kleet Avenue children now —”

“Cicily Byrd, what’s come over you?” Eleanor broke out finally. “You’re just as different from what you were in the Academy two hours ago — from what you are anywhere else!”

Cicily looked up, her small, dark clever face curiously softened.

“I suppose it’s Frances Armstrong at the bottom. You see, down here, I’m in her sphere of influence. I suspect — possibly — she’s growing a wee, wee bit of a soul in me. It frightens me to think of it, because it makes you so fearfully responsible. You don’t mind when you aren’t aware of possessing one, but when you feel it stirring, you

somehow don't dare to kill it, even though the growing hurts."

"I don't know what in the world you're talking about," Eleanor cried hopelessly.

"Maybe I don't myself," Cicily responded lightly. But the soft look was still in her dark eyes.

X

THINGS SURE ARE FIERCE; BUT CHERRY ALLEY IS GOING TO HAVE A CHRISTMAS TREE

THE next day Forbes, Daley & Company laid off two hundred men. Sarah Ann was part of the reason that they were laid off. At least, the reason was the Industrial Situation; and little, ignorant gallant Sarah Ann, working so hard for her family, and so pathetically destitute of all knowledge of the real needs of a working man, was one of the thousands of human atoms that made up the situation. And though Sarah Ann would have stared in bewilderment at the phrase, she knew an industrial situation only too well when she encountered it—knew it with a pitiful first-hand understanding possessed by very few of the wise and learned men who were giving lectures and writing books about it. It meant that “they” spent most of their time in the saloons, or else at home, sleeping off the drunk. It meant humiliat-

ing encounters with grocer and rent-collector; it meant hunger and cold and sick children. No wonder Sarah Ann's heart almost stopped for a moment, and then seemed to fall like a crushing weight in her meagre little body when she recognised the old symptoms that morning. The symptoms were that Pop refused to get up, and swore at her when she reminded him of the time.

"But you'll be late for work, Pop," she pleaded, fighting desperately against that awful fear.

"Shut up, d — ye," Pop shouted back at her. "There ain't no work — *now* will ye stop y'r noise?" Pop was suffering too, but he did not know that that was what was the matter. It was his helpless anger at the whole tangled scheme of things that caught him like this.

Sarah Ann dropped limply on the edge of a chair. Her anxious face might have been seventy years old in the look that suddenly fell upon it. It was the terrible look of those who know. She never thought of being angry at Pop. Part of her knowledge — and a greater knowledge than thousands of people ever attain — was that "they" were not to blame. But the thing that

smote her into that sudden terrible look of age, was Juliana. The last time that there had been a Situation, there was no Juliana.

"Lord, ain't it fierce!" she said in a still voice. She did not know that it was a prayer, but God knew it.

She slipped off the chair presently — Sarah Ann never would be one to accept defeat without fighting — and began getting breakfast. She and Bobby had it alone, Juliana and Pop both being asleep. She was so unwontedly grave and silent that it frightened Bobby who kept eying her with furtive glances, and as soon as his breakfast was over, slipped silently out of the room, and down the stairs. He expected to be called back, every second, but Sarah Ann did not notice that he had gone, so deep was she in plans for her desperate battle with fate. The first thing was to go through Pop's pockets. She went at it with the expert business-like skill common in Cherry Alley. The result was alarmingly small — only eighty-six cents — and some of it must be put back for the saloon. Sarah Ann, with that old shrunken face, sat studying the problem which seemed to grow

greater every moment. If she put back twenty cents — or put back ten, and kept out ten more for the next day, that would leave sixty-six cents. She must spend that for provisions at once so that Pop could not get it. The ten cents a day she earned would buy Juliana's milk. The rest they must live on till Pop got work again.

Juliana was still sleeping. Outside, a bleak and drizzly morning was creeping reluctantly through the city. Sarah Ann threw an apron over her head — the street costume most commonly in favour in Cherry Alley — and went down to the Stuyvesant Avenue grocery.

Trade was at full swing at the Stuyvesant Avenue grocery, but Dan Creedle the proprietor, gave Sarah Ann the nod accorded regular patrons, when she came in, and in due time got around to her.

"Well, Sar' Ann," he said, "what can we do for you? Hot house grapes? Duck? Turkey?"

It was an old joke to which Sarah Ann usually responded, but this morning she acknowledged it only by the mere flicker of a smile.

"I want a pint of beans," she ordered, "an' three loaves of bread an' a pound of sugar an' some bologna; an' a half peck of pertaters an' see that you fill in with little pertaters, too, in the chinks. I ain't goin' to put up with any sech measure as last time — more'n half holes!"

"Now Sar' Ann, you quit that," Dan Creedle warned her sharply. "*I* ain't goin' to put up with no reputation fer cheatin'. I won't take that from nobody."

Sarah Ann shrugged her shoulders. "'S'up to you," she responded succinctly, and added with a shrewd sidelong glance, "All of us ladies is talkin' it over — the measures we get."

Dan Creedle muttered something under his breath which was not complimentary to Sarah Ann. It was infuriating to be worsted by a ten-year-old kid, but he knew the power of Sarah Ann's tongue. He measured the potatoes, and then heaped the measure with elaborate care.

"I hope you 'ladies' will be satisfied for once," he said sarcastically; then his face changed; instead of the insulting triumph he had expected to see in Sarah Ann's eyes, he discovered something

so close to tears that he was puzzled, Sarah Ann not being the "crying kind."

"What's up, kid?" he asked shortly.

Sarah Ann put the tragedy in five words.

"Pop. He's lost his job."

Dan Creedle whistled. He was another man. Cherry Alley has its own creed, and the leading article in it is to stand by a neighbour in a hard time.

"That's hard luck, kid," he said. "Look here — don't ye worry. You drop in every once in a while — there'll always be a loaf of bread or some bits of vegetables left over. Don't say nothin' to nobody but jest drop in on the sly."

"You're real good," Sarah Ann answered earnestly. She choked over it for a moment, and then confessed.

"The potatoes was all right — I was jest tryin' ter git more."

"Shut yer mouth," Dan Creedle returned.

Sarah Ann, the tired face under the old apron, a bit less desolate, went home with the bread and potatoes and sausage. She found Pop had gone out. It was a relief; Sarah Ann knew from life-

long experience, that there is nothing you can do for them at such times. After she came back from carrying the Janny baby to the nursery — that terrible white nursery that haunted her more than ever to-day — she stopped in Mrs. Mullony's for the comfort her burdened heart was aching for.

"Pop's lost his job," she announced abruptly, over Juliana's head.

"Whist now, Sar' Ann, you don't say," Mrs. Mullony responded. (She had seen Pop go down to the saloon, and knew it already.) "That's hard luck, Sarah Ann."

"It's fierce," Sarah Ann declared, as she had declared two hours before.

"'Tis all of that, the good Lord knows," Mrs. Mullony agreed. "We all go thro' it wan time er another, but most of us is older than you, Sar' Ann, an' that's a fact. But don't ye worry, Darlint — we'll see ye through."

"Do you s'pose," Sarah Ann tried to make her voice indifferent, but it quivered in spite of her; "do you s'pose 'twill be f'r long?"

"Shure no, mavourneen," Mrs. Mullony lied valiantly. "Ain't they allus a-wantin' fine up-

standin' min like your Pa f'r all sorts o' jobs? I'll wager me new shoes that I bought last week that he'll be gettin' a better wan than he had before. Then won't ye be ashamed of pullin' a long face over a trifle av a day or two?"

"Are you sure, Mrs. Mullony?" Sarah Ann cried eagerly; for, after all, she was only ten years old, and, while she saw through "them" with infinite ease, a woman of experience was a different matter.

"Sure as I'm standin' on me two fate this blessed minute," Mrs. Mullony replied. "An' look at Juliana, the crathur! If she ain't a-smilin'! If ye don't like that fer a sign, Sar' Ann!"

Juliana was indeed smiling her brief and watery smile. One who studied Juliana's habits closely, might have suspected her of irony. But Sarah Ann's anxious face lit incredibly.

"She is," she cried, "she really is! Oh, *Juliana!*"

All her troubles, hardships, anxieties were eclipsed by the supreme joy of Sarah Ann's life. Juliana had smiled.

But the days that followed were hard ones. If the Lady Cop had known, she could have helped, but her parish was full of sad and difficult problems, and day after day, when Sarah Ann stopped for her dime, she pushed open the door upon empty rooms. The dime was always there, hidden under the reading-lamp, but the silence and the emptiness made Sarah Ann hurry away as quickly as possible: silence and emptiness were unknown things in Cherry Alley, and Sarah Ann felt like a stranger in an alien and hostile land when she encountered them.

So the Lady Cop was not, as yet, one of the friends through whom God was answering Sarah Ann's pitiful, ignorant little prayer. There were, however, many others who were answering it — neighbours who sent in a bite of this or that, or shared a meal with the children. For these days Pop was never at home except when he was "sleeping it off"; he picked up his meals in the saloons, but how he got money for his drink nobody knew. Sarah Ann was only grateful to have him out of the house as much as he was; she never asked questions. She knew it would not do.


The worst day was the one when the rent-collector appeared. Mrs. Finn sent hasty warning of his arrival, and Sarah Ann promptly locked the door. Then carrying Juliana into the bedroom and closing that door upon her, she returned to a station near the keyhole. It was a foolish thing to do, and Sarah Ann hardly knew why she did it; perhaps it was from some haunting fear that the lock would give way. She wished that she had asked somebody in to keep her company, but it was too late for that — the agent was already coming up the stairs. Sarah Ann held her breath while he knocked — knocked again, and then hammered on the door. A rent-collector's calling in Cherry Alley is not an easy one; there is no place for the cultivation of finer courtesies. The knocking was accompanied by threats and remarks nicely calculated to provoke retort. Sarah Ann crowded a portion of her skirt into her mouth to prevent even whispered rejoinder, and sat as if she had been carved in the chair. There was no sound in the room except the hoarse ticking of the alarm clock lying on its side, with one leg in the air. Everything would have gone well (from Sarah Ann's

point of view) had not Juliana suddenly decided that she disliked the pounding, and lifted her voice in protest. The agent, who was just upon the point of giving up, turned back and rattled the door violently; then Sarah Ann heard something scratch at the keyhole, and then an uglier hammering began.

"You might just as well open the door," he warned her. "I know you're in there. That kid's a dead give-away. Folks don't lock up rooms *with the keys inside!* If you don't fork out the rent, it's the street for your sticks, and you know it!"

"Street nothin'," Sarah Ann cried back, unplugging her mouth. "You can't turn nobody out inside a month, an' you know that. Jest you try it onct, that's all. It won't be any picnic f'r you."

This the agent knew to be a truth. Cherry Alley had a way of standing by its own; doubtless the law could and would be enforced, but there would be unpleasant incidents first. Which did not make his temper pleasanter. Still, there was nothing else to do that afternoon. He delayed long enough to tell Sarah Ann his opinion of her,



and then departed without waiting to hear her opinion of him, in which he had the best of it. For that afternoon, however, the honours were with Sarah Ann. But the day of reckoning was sure to come; he had only to wait.

On the way down stairs he pushed by a man coming up. The man was Jake Peters who, being a sub-renter, had no direct dealings with agents. But he knew them by sight, and his quick mind made connections. It would be rent day for Sarah Ann, and of course the kid didn't have any money. He stood at the top of the stairs and watched till the agent had disappeared; then he went on up to Sarah Ann's door.

"It's Jake, kid," he called.

Sarah Ann opened the door. She was looking frightened and triumphant at the same time.

"The agent was here. He didn't get nothin' off'n me!" she announced.

Jake nodded. "Good fer you, Sar' Ann. Don't let nobody knock y'out. But what ye goin' ter do? He'll be back next week."

"He can't turn me out next week, neither," Sarah Ann asserted stubbornly.

Jake Peters was thinking. He eyed Sarah Ann's stunted little figure. But there seemed no other way.

"I've got a notion," he began hesitatingly. "I'm goin' to be busy f'r a month or so. S'pose you could manage my laundry? 'Tain't," he grinned over it himself, "'tain't elaborate. But I reckon 'twould be worth about what that feller's after. What's up, kid?"

For into Sarah Ann's face had flashed a look of joy inexplicable upon the ground of mere rent. Cherry Alley did not take rent with *that* seriousness.

"Oh," Sarah Ann cried with a long breath, "*now it can be blued!*"

So, altogether, the day that began so blackly, ended rather pleasantly after all. And the next day Sarah Ann heard of the Tree.

The news of the Tree was late in reaching Sarah Ann; that is to say, most of Cherry Alley knew of it as much as three quarters of an hour earlier than she did. This unusual circumstance was due to the fact that of Sarah Ann's two most intimate neighbours, Mrs. Mullony was out scrubbing, and

Mrs. Finn was down with a headache, the day when the great news was abroad, while Sarah Ann herself was busy with Juliana's washing. Had she been out in the Alley or on the stairway, she would have caught it on the fly. As it was, it was the middle of the afternoon (the news having arrived at two-thirty) when Sarah Ann, starting out to borrow a bit of washing powder, spied an excited group at Mary Finegan's steps, and promptly went across to see what was happening. Sarah Ann had a keen sense of values. Washing could wait, but life could not. Nobody knew by what door great events might enter; therefore she never passed an open one without investigation. She wedged her way, by dint of elbows and moral force, between Katie Barney (who, not from any hoggishness, but by virtue of her overflowing figure, always took up more than her fair share of every crowd) and Mary Finegan herself.

"What's it?" asked Sarah Ann.

A dozen voluble voices answered her.

"A Christmas Tree, Sar' Ann — did ye iver?"

"Over in Beeman's Hall 'twill be."

"Fer all the childer under fifteen —"

"An' prisints, Sar' Ann — gran' prisints f'r ivery soul of thim."

"An' turkey an' ice cream, my Micky's tellin' me."

"And my Cora says —"

Sarah Ann had instantly grasped the situation and formulated her plan of campaign. She announced it without fumbling, clearly and decisively as is the habit of genius.

"Bobby's goin' — an' Juliana."

The chorus displayed differing themes — protest — sympathy — consolation.

"Av course Bobby'll be goin' an' yersilf, Sar' Ann —"

"But not Juliana, mavourneen — the Tree ain't fer babies, ye see, darlint —"

"Sure an' we'll take care of Juliana fer ye, Sar' Ann, an' ye needn't to be grievin' seein' as she's too little to know. But fer Bobby 'twill be fine an' grand —"

Sarah Ann faced them inflexibly and repeated her ultimatum, reversing the order that there should be no misunderstanding.

"Juliana's goin' an' Bobby."

"But, darlint, Juliana couldn't eat the turkey an' ice cream — don't ye see, Sar'Ann? Whin she's two years older —"

"Turkey nuthin'," Sarah Ann, expert in babies' diet dismissed the suggestion with contempt. "Who's talkin' about turkey? Juliana can see the Tree. Juliana loves to see things *an' she's goin'.*" And having announced her ultimatum, Sarah Ann bored her way out of the group and flew upstairs to tell Juliana.

Juliana was lying on the bed as Sarah Ann had left her, apparently absorbed in the philosophy of life advocated by the Preacher. She could have screamed and made things unpleasant for the neighbours; she could have screamed still harder and brought her slave upstairs on wings of terror. There were times — not infrequent times — when it pleased Juliana to do these things. To-day, however, it was not worth while; she preferred to lie and stare at the dingy ceiling, her tiny old face as blank as the portion of the universe which she honoured with her attention. When Sarah Ann caught her up in joyous excitement, she lay limp

and heavy in her arms, still gazing upon the ceiling with the fixity of an Eastern mystic.

"Juliana," Sarah Ann cried. "Oh, Juliana, *darlin'*, the most loveliest thing is going to happen! It's a Christmas tree, Juliana. I don't know what a Christmas tree is, *darlin'*, but we know about Christmas, 'cause the Lady Cop told us, an' it's got presents in it, like my secret that you don't know about, an' turkey, an' ice cream. You won't care about that part of it, but you will about the Tree because we ain't none of us ever seen one, an' it sounds so nice. Mebbe it'll be as nice as the wedding, *darlin'*—the one I've told you about so often; oh, I'm most sure it will from things they said about it being all shiny and glittery. An' you're goin', Juliana. *You're goin'.*"

Juliana made no response. Her attitude implied that she had done with the glittering vanities of life once and forever. Sarah Ann tickled her face wistfully with one scrawny finger. Juliana's new philosophy did not acknowledge the possibility of tickles. Sarah Ann, with a sigh, surrendered all expectation of response, but hope still glowed in her heart.

"I know you're quiet now, Juliana, but how you will smile then! I wouldn't wonder if you laughed right out. There won't be any baby half so pret —"

The sentence broke, pierced by a sudden stab of fear. They had said, downstairs, that there *wouldn't* be any baby — that babies were not to be allowed. And while Sarah Ann had met the declaration with unfaltering front, as was her custom, the dart had penetrated her armour. She would find out — she must find out; and if the Lady Cop failed her — well, then she would fight her battle alone. It was almost time to go for the Janny baby; her restless fear drove her to know the worst at once. She carried Juliana — indifferently signifying that one ceiling was as good as another — down to Mrs. Mullony's room, and started for the nursery. For once the white room did not torture her — she had a closer problem to deal with. She received the Janny baby, settling him on her small sharp shoulder, and murmuring endearments to him from force of habit — because Sarah Ann could no more help petting a baby than a rose can help opening to

the sun — but her thoughts were not with him. If the Lady Cop said Juliana wouldn't be allowed at the tree, *how could she get around her?* Sarah Ann's sure instinct told her that the Lady Cop, once she refused a thing, would not be at all easy to "get around."

"But most of 'em are," Sarah Ann declared, snatching at the only straw of comfort in sight. "Most of 'em are dead easy. I'd get through somehow without her seein'. We're awful small to slip through places — me an' Juliana."

Mrs. Janny was in one of her loquacious moods, but Sarah Ann made short work of her. She deposited the baby beside her, with an absent-minded little pat on his round head as she put him down, and declared that she had something to do and couldn't stop.

"Seems 's if nobody's stopped all day," Mrs. Janny complained tearfully. "People flyin' up an' down, but nobody any time to drop in with a body that's too weak to get out an' hear about things. You might stay a minute, Sar' Ann."

"Can't," Sarah Ann declared, unmoved; "but

I may catch your Maggie outside an' if I do I'll send her up; I'll make her go." It was no feeble boast, for Maggie, although she had lived nearly half as long again as Sarah Ann, possessing only about one-tenth her force, was invariably worsted in any encounter. But Maggie, it seemed, was not what Mrs. Janny was yearning for.

"Oh, my land, *don't!*" she cried sharply. "I see all I want to of Maggie or any of the kids. I want somebody with a tongue f'r news, Sar' Ann. You know you c'd think of some if you'd put your mind to it. You're awful smart f'r yer size, an' I've always said so."

"Mebbe I'll stop to-morrow, Mrs. Janny," Sarah Ann promised uncomfortably. The discomfort was neither embarrassment at the compliment, nor the sense of unfairness in accepting it and making no return. It was rather the consciousness of the exciting news that she was withholding. But she must settle about Juliana first though all the world waited.

"I'm most sure I can stop to-morrow, Mis' Janny," she repeated, "but I can't to-day, honest." And she was out of the room and down the stairs,

Mrs. Janny's complaints following her tearfully till she reached the street.

And after all, she might just as well have stopped, for the Lady Cop was late in coming home. Sarah Ann wandered restlessly about the rooms and up and down the street for a square each way. Bobby would be coming home — Juliana was overstaying her call upon Mrs. Mullony — the washing was still soaking in the tub — a score of duties called, yet Sarah Ann hung on desperately. The whole universe might stop, but she must find out about Juliana and that Tree.

But the Friend came at last. Her fine face, worn and saddened in the last few weeks, brightened to welcome at the sight of the small tense figure. Sarah Ann had some question upon her mind, it was evident. Sarah Ann's questions about life were always imperative, and brooked no delay.

"What is it, Sarah Ann?" she asked, dropping into a chair and leaning her head wearily against its back (Sarah Ann was too young to realise the significance of that), but smiling at her with eyes of warm unflinching sympathy.

"It's Juliana," Sarah Ann explained breathlessly. "She *can* go, can't she? They said babies couldn't, but I knew it couldn't mean not Juliana."

"Not Juliana where, dear? I don't quite understand."

"To the Christmas Tree. They said she couldn't, but I said she was."

"Oh!" The Lady Cop's voice revealed a sudden illumination. She drew Sarah Ann's small tense figure close.

"You *child!*" The exclamation held a score of things that Sarah Ann did not understand, but reading her friend's tender eyes with her sharp ones, Sarah Ann knew that it was going to be all right; and suddenly, to her bewilderment, she felt queer — shaky and dizzy. When the queerness passed, she was on the Lady Cop's lap, inconceivably rested and happy, with that feeling of being lighted up inside.

"Yes, dear, we will let Juliana in," the Lady Cop was saying. "You see, most little babies can't go, because there isn't room for their mothers; we wish there was, but there isn't — we can

just take children, this year. But since you are only ten, Sarah Ann, you go in, and if you don't mind holding Juliana while you eat —"

Sarah Ann sat up. The illumination had reached her face now. It was a homely little face without one single beauty in it, but the Lady Cop thought it, at that moment, the most beautiful face she had ever seen.

"*I* don't have to eat," Sarah Ann cried. "I don't have to eat *anything*. But Juliana can see the Tree. Oh, I just *knew* she could!"

XI

THE GLOVE WILL NOT DO; IT SURE IS A ONE-ER;
BUT SARAH ANN FINDS A WAY OUT

THE Tree — Cherry Alley's first Christmas tree — demanded vast preparations. Of course everybody realised this at once and rivalry ran high. Maggie Finegan, who usually announced her age as sixteen, but now declared herself only "goin' on," and therefore slipped in on the edge of the law — was already enduring the torture of curl-papers, a week before the event. Cora Velati boasted exceedingly of a new pair of shoes to be bought, heaven and mothers alone know how, in honour of the occasion. Rosa Finn acquired a huge red hair ribbon which she could not resist wearing so frequently that it was in danger of becoming an heirloom long before the event. A dozen times a day, the guests-to-be — the feminine contingent, that is — gathered to compare notes and display any new possession.

At these meetings Sarah Ann was present as often as her duties permitted, and since, as has been hinted before, Sarah Ann's household affairs did not run upon schedule, she seldom failed to drop in sooner or later. Sarah Ann's presence at these conferences was at the same time dreaded and desired; she had a way of seeing through things one desired to keep secret, which was maddening; at the same time her approval — partly because it was none too easy to win — was highly prized and much sought after. Nobody, whatever the chance of its winning only scorn, could help showing Sarah Ann her acquisitions; and the very uncertainty of her response made the excitement of the chance the more alluring.

There was Jinny McKee, for instance, who appeared one afternoon with a lace collar and a pink bow. The girls were highly congratulatory — all except Sarah Ann. She gave Jinny one sharp glance, followed by a second, just to make sure; then she glanced carelessly away — the matter had lost interest for her.

"You got the collar off'n your sister Lizzie — the dress with the blue spots she had last summer;

the bow's out of Nance Creely's white hat — under side."

Jinny's jaw fairly dropped.

"If you ain't the limit, Sar' Ann! How'd you know?"

"I guess I've got eyes," Sarah Ann retorted contemptuously. And then, having had her triumph, her heart softened. "But it looks real swell," she added kindly. "There won't no one else guess it, if you just hold up your head, like you looked down on common folks. Holdin' up your head," Sarah Ann declared wisely, "is most of it."

"I dunno's I know how," Jinny muttered uncomfortably; Jinny was that *rara avis* in Cherry Alley, a humble soul. "Mebbe if you'd sort o' show me how —"

"Sure I will," Sarah Ann replied promptly. "It's a cinch. You do it mostly with your nose — this way," and Sarah Ann, notwithstanding the handicap of Juliana, marched down the alley with a nose that registered scorn for all the world. It was a splendid spectacle, and loudly applauded, and everybody else was eager to try, all of them

— except poor Jinny — scoring success, even though no one quite touched Sarah Ann. At last, a little breathless, they finally stopped. It was then that Rosie Finn brought out the subject of her hair-ribbon. Rosie, whose locks were carrot, passionately envied golden hair; she tied the magenta ribbon to a bunch of the carrot locks on top of her head, and breathlessly awaited Sarah Ann's verdict.

"It sorter takes the colour out, but it's a whopper for style, an' no mistake," Sarah Ann decided.

"I ain't carin' fer my hair to look as red as it *c'd*," Rosie explained. "I think it makes it look sorter yellow, don't you, Sar' Ann?"

"If that ribbon's red, your hair *ain't*," Sarah Ann pronounced. "They ain't any more alike'n oranges an' beets."

"Oh, Sar' Ann, do you think so?"

"Ain't that what I said?" Sarah Ann retorted.

Rosie pulled off the ribbon and folded it with passionate affection. Sarah Ann, shifting Juliana to the other shoulder and turning to go, had no instinct to warn her that the hour of triumph is

perilously close to the hour of humiliation. She did not even feel it coming when Rosie asked suddenly:

"What you goin' to wear, Sar' Ann?"

She answered carelessly, "I ain't made up my mind yet whether it'll be blue satin or di'monds."

"Go long, Sar' Ann," Rosie giggled. "Tell me — I told you."

"There ain't anybody you ain't told," Sarah Ann rejoined, unmoved. "If there was ten of me, you'd have told 'em all."

Now Rosie had a red-haired temper; and suddenly, out of the blue, she hurled her bolt. "All right for you, Sar' Ann! I know what 'tis. You ain't got nothin' — that's what 'tis — *you ain't got nothin' f'r any one of you!*"

Sarah Ann whirled about; she whirled so rapidly that even the impassive Juliana blinked and gasped. It had been but a moment since she turned away, yet in that moment the whole world had changed; where she had left an admiring circle, she read now on every face, curiosity, suspicion, eagerness. Sarah Ann's glance swept them all, to fasten upon Rosa.

"Rosie Ann Finn, did you ever know me not to get anythin' I set out to?"

"N-no," Rosie faltered, "I ain't sayin' that, Sar' Ann."

"You'd better not," Sarah Ann retorted coldly, and turning her back upon them all with magnificent indifference, she marched away without another glance.

Up in her own room, however, with the door fastened, and nobody but Juliana to see, the bravado fell away, and Sarah Ann sat very still, staring into a corner of the room and facing her problem. Sarah Ann was always grappling with problems — every hour brought them to her, but this one, dealing as it did with new conditions, and demanding new resources, was almost too much for her. It was not exactly an easy task to hector a butcher into letting you have some bits of meat, but at least it could be done; it was another and very different matter to secure adornment worthy of a Christmas tree. For Juliana the question was gloriously settled — Juliana would have her Christmas hood to wear. And for Bobby, too, the case was not impossible. Once Sarah Ann, in

one of her rare trips to the strange world beyond Stuyvesant Avenue, had passed a school just as the boys were pouring out, and stopping for observation, had absorbed details greedily. Shoes, trousers (baggy at the knee), jackets, caps, ties — she absorbed them all, and promptly priced every one in Stuyvesant Avenue emporiums. Everything was beyond her reach except the tie; a tie she could get for ten cents, and a tie Bobby should wear to the Christmas tree. Sarah Ann foresaw trouble — an infuriated Bobby desperate over the insult to his manhood, and the prospect of taunts and jeers from his fellows; but Sarah Ann would be firm — Bobby should wear a tie.

But for herself! Sarah Ann's tired face grew strained with the worry of it. Of course there was the Glove! Sarah Ann brightened for a moment — then shook her head. She had an instinct for occasions; the Glove would not suit. Besides, owing to the superfluous finger lengths of it, it would get into things and be in the way. No, the Glove, quite evidently, was not for Christmas trees. If she only had a breastpin! Sarah Ann ran over the long list of her acquaintances, but

none whom she felt privileged to borrow from possessed this luxury; besides, Sarah Ann did not want to borrow; borrowed adornment would not make good her boast.

“It sure is a one-er,” Sarah Ann sighed.

For the next few days, Sarah Ann might be said to have lived in an atmosphere of Breastpin. There were times when Juliana held her attention with the conspicuous success that always attended Juliana’s moves in this direction; there was one dark day when Pop lay around for hours, and even Sarah Ann’s stout heart quailed before his temper, although she did not let him see it. But the next day Pop disappeared again, and the Breastpin, temporarily obscured, once more shone in the sky with its alluring fascination. Gold, Sarah Ann wanted, with a shiny stone in it. Like the one Abe Cohen had in his window so long. Or maybe a big gold flower — Sarah Ann wavered between the two visions. Half a dozen times Sarah Ann almost took the Lady Cop into her confidence, but an unwonted shyness restrained her — perhaps because the Lady Cop herself never wore one — not what you’d call one — only

a little simple one like a ring. Sarah Ann's devotion was of the sturdy variety that refuses to surrender its tastes and its opinions without good cause being shown. "But then," she added hopefully, "we ain't seen her at a Christmas, Juliana. Mebbe she'll be all shiny then, most like Her. She ain't so pretty, but she's *next* pretty to you and Her. Oh, *Juliana!*" This last was the transport that always swept Sarah Ann at the thought of Juliana all shining and glittering with a veil flying about her, 'most like great soft wings. Juliana gazed at her with her inscrutable crossed eyes, but she did not yawn as she sometimes did. This was so marvellous an evidence of interest that Sarah Ann rocked her in an ecstasy of happiness.

It was Otto Heintzlemann who finally solved the problem for her—or rather it was Otto Heintzlemann's Christmas cake—the one that got whitewashed over. The Christmas cake had been put in the window nearly a week before, but Sarah Ann, owing to the multiplicity of matters demanding her attention, had not yet had time to examine it. Upon this bleak afternoon, however, she started five minutes early for the Janny baby,

in order that she might take the window on the way. Reports had come to her of the glory of this particular cake, and she wished to decide for herself upon its merits.

It was a very fine cake, unquestionably. It was so big that, if it were the wedding-bell cake of other seasons, it had grown a large addition — been raised, like a building, for a new first story. The shining icing that concealed its interior was as curly as Maggie Finegan's hair would be after a week of curl papers; and it was decorated, not with white, as usual, but with gold leaves that looked as shiny as the gold in Abe Cohen's window. It was those leaves that gave Sarah Ann her inspiration. She stood staring at them for one breathless moment; then she pushed open the door and walked up to the counter.

Otto Heintzlemann, huge and shapeless, and dressed in what had once been white, which gave him the effect of having been iced, like his cakes, looked down at his customer across a barricade of bread and rolls. She was not entirely unknown to him, having come in once or twice at rare intervals when she could afford a treat, and bar-

gained with a shrewdness that had amused him immensely. The last treat had been so long ago, however, that it might well have been forgotten, especially as Sarah Ann looked so like a score of other little girls in Cherry or any other alley. But Sarah Ann's flavour was entirely her own. Once tasted it was rarely forgotten.

Otto Heintzlemann had a great voice that boomed like a trombone, but his speech — except his own name — was every-day American, as it had a right to be, his grandfather before him having baked for Stuyvesant Avenue. Leaning over his counter, he welcomed Sarah Ann.

"Well, I'm blest if it ain't Lizer Ann!"

"Sarah," Sarah Ann corrected him.

"Sarah Ann, *to* be sure! And what can I do for you, Sarah Ann? Would you like to look at wedding cakes? Fine assortment — all styles."

"Not yet," Sarah Ann retorted. "I ain't had time to think about trifles like weddings. Life's too busy."

Mr. Heintzlemann threw back his head and laughed. Even Sarah Ann was startled by the volume of sound emitted.

"Ain't you afraid of blowin' 'em off?" she asked, indicating the barricade.

Mr. Heintzlemann exploded again, "I'll tell you a secret, Lizer Ann — I should say Sarah. Sometimes I do — blow 'em clean off this counter and stack 'em up on the one on the other side. It's one neat little trick."

"Aw, go long," said Sarah Ann. Then, perceiving signs of another explosion, she protested anxiously, "Don't — there ain't time — it takes you so long to get over it, an' I've got to be goin' on. I wanted to ask you," Sarah Ann caught the edge of the counter for moral support, and looked up at him with such wistfulness in her sharp eyes that his laughter sobered at once. "I wanted to ask you — Those leaves on the cake in the window — are they real gold — like Cohen's, you know?"

"Sure, they're real gold. You wouldn't find any yellower, would you? But it ain't the same as Cohen's — that kind ain't fashionable for confectionery: it's too stiff for modelling. We prefer our own brand."

Sarah Ann, clinging to the counter, felt a curi-

ous limpness as if there were no bones anywhere in her meagre little body, but she did not give up.

"Is it — terrible expensive?" she faltered.

"Well now, Sarah Ann, you know all gold comes high —" Sarah Ann nodded and waited, catching a hopeful note in his voice—"and this is the best of its kind. But I ain't such a Jew as Cohen. If you'd like to give me an order I'd promise it to you reasonable."

"How much," Sarah Ann asked hoarsely, "would one leaf cost? Could I wash it out? I can wash awful hard."

Mr. Heintzlemann was actually stunned. He stared down at her over the counter.

"*One leaf!*" he echoed.

"Ain't that what I said?" Sarah Ann asked sharply.

Suddenly Mr. Heintzlemann turned to the back of the store. "Mother!" he roared. "Mother, you come out here — quick!"

The red portière concealing the back room moved. Sarah Ann waited with the suspense with which one sometimes waits for the lifting of the curtain on the stage. Sarah Ann never had been

in a theatre in her life, but she knew that life held endless possibilities behind doors. And the fat little woman who rolled through the doorway, following sundry jerks of the portière, Sarah Ann knew, the moment she set eyes upon her, belonged to the company of friends.

"This here young lady, Mother," Mr. Heintzlemann set forth the situation, "is asking the price of goldleaf — of *a* gold leaf. Now what should you think of that?"

Sarah Ann, looking straight into the motherly eyes, drew a long breath and relaxed her hold upon the edge of the counter.

"It's for the Christmas tree," she explained. "For a breastpin. Everybody's dressin' up an' I hadn't nothin'. An' I thought if I could have one leaf — it could be pinned on, you know —"

She waited, her heart beating rapidly. "I'd work it out," she explained earnestly, "I can wash things, you know; or scrub — or most anything."

"What would you say to giving her the job of kalsomining the ceiling?" Mr. Heintzlemann asked with a wink. "But I forgot — there's the union. Do you belong to the union, young lady?"

Sarah Ann never even heard him. She was waiting her verdict. And fat Mrs. Heintzle-mann, looking down into Sarah Ann's eyes, put a big soft hand on her shoulder, and turned upon her husband.

"For shame on you, teasing a child like that! You know she can have a leaf — there's plenty in the box on the shelf. And see you pick out a good one — here, I'll do it myself."

Five minutes later, Sarah Ann, a golden leaf, with a safetypin on the back for a clasp, held tightly in her hand, was walking down the avenue with her heart doing all sorts of jubilant calisthenics inside her thin dress. Life had been good to her again. She could be adorned gloriously for the Tree. She would not shame Juliana.

XII

THE TWENTY-THIRD AT LAST; AND SARAH ANN SMITTEN WITH A TERRIBLE MADNESS

THE Tree was to be on the twenty-third. As the days mounted into the twenties excitement ran fever-high through the alley. Rumour in such dazzling garb as Rumour seldom has been known to wear, flashed back and forth on gossamer wings, whispering at each child's ear of the glories to come. In certain families, fasting was cheerfully borne for the sake of the feast before them. In certain others, mothers (and I grieve to say that Sarah Ann was among them) took base advantage of the unwonted opportunity offered, and the standard of behaviour among the children rose to incredible heights. The demands of Sarah Ann, indeed, should have entitled Bobby's beautiful head to a halo of the first order, for not only did she exact an almost impossible perfection of conduct, but for the whole day of the twenty-

third, Bobby was kept in the house — this because Sarah Ann had decided to give him his “real” bath in the morning, finishing touches to be put on at the last moment. Such a state of immaculateness was hard enough to bear, but worse was to follow; something in Sarah Ann demanded that everything in her little kingdom pay its tribute to the wonderful event. Not alone her children, but her house, must be scrubbed. Always before when this madness seized his sister, Bobby had asserted the immemorial masculine prerogative, and fled to the company of his fellows. Upon this dark and woeful day which was to be the prelude to joy, Bobby had to sit on the bed and entertain Juliana who, apparently disapproving of the way events were going as much as he, did her best to make his task no sinecure. Truly, Bobby on that memorable day earned his reward. Truly, too, had Sarah Ann been as profound a student of psychology as she was an unconscious practitioner of it, she could have devised no more certain way to make the joy supreme when its hour came.

The doors were to be opened to the turkey at

six sharp. That meant that the guests would begin to arrive anywhere from three o'clock on, and that the really fashionable time of arrival would be five. At four, Sarah Ann, every bone in her small body aching, wiped her hands, left her soppy floor to dry by a process that resembled islands gradually spreading till they became the whole continent, and went back into the bedroom where Juliana was expressing her opinion of a sister who abandoned her for floors.

Sarah Ann mechanically gathered Juliana up in her tired arms and turned sharply to Bobby, who was clamouring to get down, and suiting the action to the word.

"If you go one step into the other room," Sarah Ann declared inexorably, "you won't go to the Christmas to-night."

Bobby stopped short in his wild rush for freedom, as if smitten by some fearful spell.

"Jutht going to look at the clock, Tha'rann," he muttered. "Ith awful late an' we won't get any turkey —"

Terrified by the awful picture his prophecy con-

jured up, Bobby broke into passionate weeping, compounded of fear and anger in equal parts which, as everybody knows, is the worst kind to manage. Usually, Sarah Ann would have relented at once, all the mother in her rushing to allay his fear, but for once Sarah Ann was too tired to be tricked. She felt as if, if one more untoward thing should happen, she would cry herself. Mothers know the feeling. Sarah Ann stamped her foot so hard that it hurt, her apology for a shoe being scant protection.

"Bobby Killian," she declared, "if you don't stop cryin' and dirtyin' up your face this very minute, *I'll wash you all over again!*"

Bobby stopped. He stopped so hastily that his eyes were full of tears which he began frantically winking back. This was a new Sarah Ann, and his unfailing instinct assured him that there would be no getting around her. It was a case for obedience — instant and absolute — the price of said obedience to be exacted later when the portents were more propitious.

"Ain't cryin', Tha'rann," he stammered hastily, "ain't cryin' one bit."

"See that you don't, then," Sarah Ann retorted inexorably. "Sit right on that chair till I get to you."

Bobby sat. He sat so still that his very toes ached, his blue eyes, dark with fear and anger, fastened upon Sarah Ann, who was beginning to do things to Juliana. It was agony, positive agony, all the things she had to do, and the time it took; fortunately for Bobby, Juliana, though bored, made no active protest; she simply threw the whole weight of things, both literally and metaphorically, upon Sarah Ann. This, for Juliana, was being so sweet that Sarah Ann's tired little heart got rested in the process, and when at last she laid Juliana, fresh in her clean dress (still tinged with blue) back upon the bed, she turned to Bobby with the old mother-look.

"Didn't dirty my fathe," Bobby declared, still anxious, the late alarm having been too severe to admit of instant recovery.

"Yes, you did, too, but it might have been worse," Sarah Ann admitted fairly. "Come on here an' let me wash you."

"Not all over!" Bobby protested in anguish.

"Not all over, Tha'rann! You wathed me all over thith mornin'."

"Maybe not" (it was a strange Sarah Ann indeed that took such unfair advantages), "but face an' neck an' ears."

This was trickery indeed — as if one cried with one's ears! But there was no escaping Sarah Ann's madness. Bobby wriggled and protested, but his ears were done over with a thoroughness that made him feel positively scraped: then his neck, far below where anybody could see; his face was scrubbed with a splendid rotary movement that made him feel as if Sarah Ann had stirred all his small features around as one stirs porridge; he put up a hand to feel whether his nose really was in its familiar place.

"Keep your hands down, Bobby Killian," Sarah Ann commanded.

"But they're all wathed," Bobby remonstrated in just grievance. How could such painfully cleansed members as his face and his hands possibly generate dirt by juxtaposition? Sarah Ann, however, was taking no risks.

"Never mind if they are washed," she replied.

"You keep your hands away from your face. They're always dirty, no matter how I scrub." And she proceeded with her deadly business, wetting his hair to make it curl, smoothing out his collar, tying the horrible bow like a girl. Lastly, as a crowning insult, when the spirit of man was worn to the last shred of endurance, kissing him ecstatically, because he looked so beautiful.

"An' now you can go out in the other room," she relented, "if you will promise not to touch a single thing, or to rub up against anything, 'cause you'll muss your collar, or to sit down, 'cause you'll wrinkle your pants, or to —"

Bobby fled. He came perilously near calamity by stumbling over the threshold, but saved himself by a miracle, and tossing back, "Didn't neither," as a useful denial suited to any charge, escaped to the outer room and comparative freedom.

There remained Sarah Ann's own toilet. It must be confessed that this was a poor and superficial affair, lacking entirely the noble thoroughness displayed through the rest of that solemn and momentous day. Fears of being late, generated possibly by Bobby, attacked her from every side.

She washed her face hastily (well for her that Bobby was not on the ground to take notes), took off her apron and put on the skirt that she hadn't worn that day: hurriedly brushed her hair and tied the two meagre pigtails with a bit of shoestring; last of all she pinned on the goldleaf breastpin.

It was terribly superficial and unworthy Sarah Ann. She would have detected the weak spots in anybody else in half a glance. Her one thought, however, was not to disgrace her family, and she trusted to the glitter of the goldleaf to dazzle critical eyes. When she looked in the scrap of mirror she did not see herself at all, but only four square inches of faded dress with the goldleaf in the middle of it. The reflection disappointed her — it did not shine as brilliantly as she had hoped that it would; however, she remembered that the room was dark even with its jet of gas. "It'll shine awful bright over there," she told herself hopefully.

One more ceremony and the long preparation would be over. This was a trick necessitating great skill, the investing Juliana in her Christmas cap under the pretence that it was her old

one; for Sarah Ann, having learned that Christmas was a fixed date, clung to it with the tenacity of a bulldog. And after all, it was easily done. Juliana had a mind above vanities; she might have been clothed in cheesecloth for all the notice she paid to it. A wretch of a little fear made a face at Sarah Ann. "Suppose she shouldn't care for Christmas!" Sarah Ann made a face back at it.

"She will *so!*" she cried. "You just *go!*" And she was so valiant that the little fear believed her and melted away.

"Tha'rann," Bobby wailed from the other room, "Tha'rann, we'll be too late, we will — *we'll be too late. Everybody'th gone* —"

"I'm coming," Sarah Ann called. "Just a minute, Bobby."

Even in the hurry and anxiety — for she was anxious, though according to the hypocritical custom of mothers she pretended that she wasn't — there was a moment of uttermost overwhelming pride, when she settled Juliana in her Christmas cap, against her shoulder.

"You do look so beautiful, dearest," she



cried ecstatically. "I just wish *She* could see you. You won't be any beautifuller when you're — One — yourself." Sarah Ann had a curious shyness in regard to the word *Bride*. She seldom said it out loud. The Vision and the Dream were not to be named in profane air. She never guessed — little ragged mother who, all her short life, had been too burdened with cares ever to think of herself at all, that she was one of the richest people in the world.

"Tha'rann, Tha'rann," Bobby implored, dancing from one foot to the other as if his impatience had made his shoes red hot. And Sarah Ann obeyed at last. Like Bobby, she knew when she had tempted fate to the uttermost.

Bobby gave a whoop and hurled himself upon the stairway.

"Bobby — Bobby!" Sarah Ann called.

It was too late. Bobby was descending in a manner that could only be described as avalanching, and in the tumult of his going no merely human voice could be heard.

"Sure I thought the walls was comin' down about me head," Mrs. Mullony told Sarah Ann

at her doorway, "an' I run out an' 'twas Bobby in the distance like the tail-end of a strake of lightnin'."

"There's times you can't hold 'em in no more'n a flea," Sarah Ann responded. But her tired face was one shining joy.

Bobby's fears had not been without warrant. It was seven minutes of five when Sarah Ann and Juliana came within sight of the steps leading up to the hall where Christmas was to be revealed, and they were already crowded with Christmas guests, pushing, wriggling, wrestling for the places of vantage nearest the door. In the midst of the crowd was one especially lively point, moving from place to place with notably exciting effect upon other particles about it; as of some especially valient leucocyte knocking out an army of phlegacytes. This was Bobby, claiming the immemorial privilege of the strong to climb over the weak, and fighting with head, hands and feet indiscriminately. He was already battered, dishevelled, bruised and breathing heavily; his worst enemy could not have taunted him with girlishness in spite of the tie streaming down his

back. He was avenging himself for the day of torture, his spirits soaring every moment.

Sarah Ann hurried to the foot of the stairway and looked up at the writhing mass with its peculiarly familiar storm-centre. Had Sarah Ann been a father instead of a mother she would have felt a thrill of splendid pride at Bobby's valour which took no account of years and battled with boys twice his size. But that kind of mother has been very rare since the days of Sparta, and Sarah Ann was the common kind that hates to see them fighting, and is full of terror for fear they will get hurt. So Sarah Ann missed a glorious moment. Besides, to see all the day's sacrifice undone in few brief seconds! Sarah Ann's thin hands clenched in agony about Juliana's limp and indifferent body. Had it not been for Juliana, Sarah Ann would have been in the thick of the crowd restoring order—or what would pass for order, considering the occasion. As it was, she had to resort to strategy. She stood at the bottom of the steps, her small scrawny figure tense with authority. She might have been a general summoning victory from a

roul. Her shrill voice penetrated the shouts of the mob.

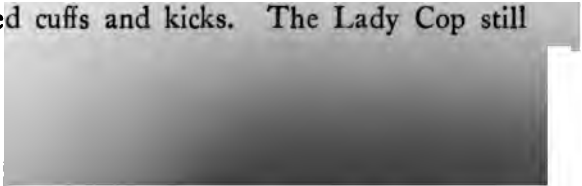
"Ef you-uns don't quit pickin' on Bobby I'll call the perlice."

There was a second's stillness, and in the second — so does fortune sometimes aid the valiant — the perlice appeared. It was a perlice in trim grey skirts and simple grey hat. Sarah Ann, with a long sigh of relief, gave over her responsibility and reverted to a little girl.

"Bobby's fightin'," she explained, "and I had him all fixed up so good!" Her voice quivered in spite of herself at the memory of the glory which was Bobby's, now alas, to be but a memory forever more.

The Lady Cop put a sympathetic hand on Sarah Ann's burdened little shoulder. It had the queer effect of making the burden seem curiously light. The Lady Cop's hand always did that — or her eyes — or her voice. Sarah Ann sighed again — this time with content — and waited.

The crowd on the steps was waiting too, its commotion subsiding to quite ordinary and unconsidered cuffs and kicks. The Lady Cop still



waited. The crowd became uncomfortable and sheepish.

"Who," the Lady Cop asked quietly, "was at the door first?"

A dozen voices hastened to inform her; their exceeding eagerness implied that the passion of their lives was the promotion of law, order and justice. The first arrival had been Tilly Pound.

"Then Tilly — but I see! Tilly is still there."

"I hanged ont'r the knob," Tilly explained proudly. "They couldn't none of 'em get nothin' off'n *me*. I was here at three o'clock, *I* was."

It had been a point of vantage, legally won, and held in the face of all assaults. Tilly Pound remained proud possessor of the First Honour.

"And who was next, Tilly?"

"Jim an' Maggie," Tilly replied. It was a new and exhilarating experience to be assisting the Law. Tilly tingled with pride which was not the best thing for her character, but presented one of the complex situations of life with which we all have to make compromise. Eagerly, patronisingly, with soaring vanity, Tilly assigned her inferiors to their places. She showed no

favouritism; she held firmly to the skirts of Truth, as the others reluctantly acknowledged. Such pre-eminence mounted to her head and made her dizzy. "Then him an' her, an' her an' her 'n him," she pointed out, the atoms so designated being no longer worthy of name. She wound up with a flaming pride like the flaunting of banners, "I saw 'em all — they couldn't none of 'em get ahead of ME!"

Something clearly must be done to save Tilly's life on the morrow, if for no higher purpose. The Lady Cop looked down the now orderly but sullen ranks.

"That's very nice," she said, "and you're all going to march in like soldiers. There will be plenty of room for everybody. But we've got to make one change. Sarah Ann and Callie Murphy and Lizzie Grumber all have children so little that they have to be carried, and they are going first — ahead even of Tilly. It's what brave men do everywhere — take care of babies first so that they won't get hurt because they can't take care of themselves. Come, Sarah Ann."

And this is the true history of the rise and fall



of Tilly Pound. If she could but have carried the door knob with her in her descent to lower fortunes! Poor Tilly Pound.

Meantime more guests were arriving every moment; they came in streams from every direction, as if in some distant region it had been raining children, who were now being poured down into this one corner of the city. More police arrived also — this time clad in the garments of authority. It is possible that the Lady Cop gave a sigh of relief when she saw them, but Cherry Alley — usually so unassailable in the matter of detail — for once missed a point. It was not strange; never in its history had Cherry Alley had such an exciting event to chronicle, and the event had such a mass of detail, all being industriously stowed away in scores of small memories, to be examined and tabulated in the dull days that were to come when Christmas was over; such as Bobby's tie, snatched by Rube Cohen, and to be distributed in bits as souvenirs to favoured ones, on the morrow; Maggie Finegan's curls which you could pull like wire springs; the way Joe Mavis trod Bud O'Brien under and Bud bit Joe's ear; the incom-

prehensible ruling of the Lady Cop in the matter of babies; the pockets Maud O'Leary had cut in her dress to carry home stolen booty in — a matter of foresight which won her a position of eminence and numerous enemies whom she wore as so many feathers in her cap, knowing truly that they were all madly envious of her. There was also Cora Velati whose new shoes were sadly marred by the swiftly moving history of the hour, and the way Maggie shed a year in order to squeeze in — a contemptible trick and scorned by all the alley which, with noble unanimity would take her down the next time she walked out with Jem Mallory. And other data too numerous to chronicle here. History and folklore in the making are thrilling things.

A car drew up at the curb and four young ladies descended from it. A thrill of ecstasy swept the throng, and the inside Cherry Alleyites nobly flattened the outside ones in an heroic attempt to make a passage for them. The ladies, gay and amused, ran lightly up the pathway, never guessing the instantaneous portraits that were taken of them, soul and body alike. Their faces

and furs, eyes, hair and size of feet, smiles and dispositions, were all instantly tabulated. What one missed another supplied. Annie Mulligan, in the very back row, it was reported the next day, had permanently stretched her neck in her effort to see, but she caught the exact and astounding number of buttons upon a certain pair of bronze shoes. This was due to an uncannily quick eye, trained in counting change when they tried to do it fast and cheat you. Many people refused to trade with certain grocers because of this peculiarity in their business method, but Annie enjoyed exercising her gift.

The excitement over these arrivals had hardly simmered down before there was another car, and then two more. The joy, mounting dizzily, was darkened by a sudden fear; suppose them guys ate up the dinner before any of Cherry Alley got in; this was dispersed by the voice of authority speaking through Sarah Ann.

"Ain't yer a lot of sapheads! As if turkey ain't common as pertaters to folks like that! Why they wouldn't go across the street to look at a hundred turkeys."

This was comforting, but still a vague fear hung about, refusing to be banished, and the last load of helpers was favoured with scant attention. A rumour started that it was after six. The Lady Cop, smiling, looked at her watch.

"Eleven minutes of," she announced.

Eleven minutes! There were still those who clung darkly to the theory of hunger upon the part of those within, and almost anything could be accomplished in eleven minutes, as they knew by experience. Upon the whole however, the spirits of the crowd began to soar. Eleven minutes to Turkey — eleven minutes to the Tree — eleven minutes to all the unrealised glory of — It! Eleven minutes — oh, surely they were gone now — well, all except two then, or four at most. Or —

"Steady lines!" called the Lady Cop, and the two policemen at the foot of the steps thrust indifferent arms through the crowd, making a barrier that held back the surging flood behind. Those nearest the door heard footsteps — the pushing back of a bolt —

"Careful, children — there's plenty of room

— *Babies first!* Nobody can go in till the babies are safe — Now it's all right —"

It was no use. The two policemen did their best, but a score could not have held the Alley back. It swept by irresistibly — the ones in front rushing frantically up the steps, those in the rear pushing furiously, the ones in the middle carried on almost without their own volition. And, miraculously, nobody was hurt. Really hurt, of course. Bruises and stepped-on feet and fingers didn't count.

And once inside — really inside — a sudden awe fell upon them. The two glorious great trees covered with shining things clear up to the tips that brushed the ceiling — Cherry Alley had no words for such an experience, and Cherry Alley without a vocabulary was conscious of its own inadequacy.

"*Gee-whith!*" Bobby muttered. It was as well as could be done at the moment.

As if he had broken the spell, the Alley settled tumultuously about the tables and began investigating its turkey. There were ladies who had insisted upon a grace, and others who thought that

a song first would be "nice." They were, one and all, defeated. Cherry Alley was in the field, and — released from that first blinding moment — holding sway according to its own unwritten but unalterable laws. Having something to eat it ate — noisily, rudely, it must be confessed, but so hungrily that more than one woman's eyes dimmed as she looked on.

"*How* long have they been fasting?" one of them asked the Lady Cop.

She shook her head, with that pain in her grey eyes that was nearly always there since she came to the Alley.

"It's hard times. They haven't been saving up for it. They — didn't need to."

She was standing near Sarah Ann at the time. Sarah Ann started guiltily as she felt the well-known hand upon her shoulder; she had been mashing some potato in gravy, but she hastily mixed it up with the other things on her plate, even while she muttered wistfully, "Seems 'sif Juliana 'd orter have *some*thin' on Christmas."

"Not this Christmas. Another year she can, a little — but it would make her sick now. Let me

take her while you eat your dinner, Sarah Ann."

"She ain't a bit of trouble. I ain't awful hungry anyway," Sarah Ann lied valiantly.

"But I have nothing to do just now. You shall have her again as soon as you are through."

So Sarah Ann surrendered her, jealously pulling down Juliana's clothes and tucking under a fold that looked especially blue. Juliana submitted with impenetrable calm. Juliana indeed was acquitting herself in a way which made Sarah Ann's heart swell with pride — gazing with crossed eyes upon the crowd and sucking her thumb steadily. Her attitude was one of noble tolerance towards inferior beings who were making such a fuss over vulgar food. For her, she was of the great spirits who are sufficient unto themselves; her own thumb satisfied her austere and exclusive soul.

Sarah Ann, eating hungrily in spite of her lie, was in danger of injuring her own eyes through trying to set them upon tasks in opposite directions, one being detailed to watch Bobby, and from time to time, add to his rapidly diminishing store from her own plate, the other never losing sight of Juliana. To Sarah Ann, mother, Christmas

had begun with a tiny shadow over the bliss, notwithstanding the wonder of the meal. You can tell the real mothers that way. Not even dark and light meat both, to say nothing of stuffing and gravy, can make up for letting some one else have your baby. It is to be feared that Sarah Ann gobbled, which was extremely reprehensible and underhanded considering that she sternly refused to allow Bobby to —, and if a feller didn't, how could yer tell that it wouldn't get taken away?

“ You're gobblin' yourself, Sar' Ann! ” Bobby cried.

“ Ain't neither,” Sarah Ann denied sharply. “ Besides, I've got to hold Juliana — she'll be gettin' heavy for her. Besides (oh, Sarah Ann, we all see through you) Juliana wants ME.”

As if she divined things, the Lady Cop came back, dragging a chair in her free hand. “ We're going to sit here, right beside you, Juliana and I, while you have your ice cream,” she said.

And then at last, over Sarah Ann's tired face flashed a smile of utter joy.

It would take too long to chronicle the whole of that supper. The ice cream was, of course, the

climax. Cherry Alley was used to ice cream only in the summer, and then you bought it in cones from the hokey-pokey man. This ice cream in squares, striped pink and white and brown and so hard that it stood up alone, was a very different matter. For one thing, it was a great deal colder. Cherry Alley stomachs were not acclimated to anything so cold, but they one and all accepted the chill that went creeping down their throats into their small persons, with magnificent heroism. One expected to suffer in such a cause. There would be tales to be told on the morrow.

Gradually however, discoveries were made. A bite (full-sized) of cake alleviated the pain. Blowing upon it was considered by some to have a mollifying effect. The most popular method however, was to mash it down into a soft slush which displayed interesting streaks of brown and pink. Softened thus, the haughty mixture became meek and harmless.

It was over at last, and the tables were cleared. Three hundred children feeling uncomfortably full, began bestowing their attention upon one an-

other. Sarah Ann — Juliana once more in her arms — was murmuring to her ecstatically. Maud O'Leary was feeling her pocket, and wondering whether she could save the drumstick (there were two good mouthfuls on it yet) and that piece of cake till she got home. She was learning that everything — even foresight and pockets — has its own peculiar temptations. Bobby and his next neighbour were engaged in an absorbing kicking contest. Suddenly the Lady Cop put her hand on Sarah Ann's shoulder, her quick "Look, Sarah Ann," lost in the breath of admiration that rose all over the room. The trees had been shining before; but now, lights — red — gold — green — blue, opened like blossoms all over their branches, and upon the tip of each shone a golden star. Four of the helpers went up on the platform, the rest ranged themselves before it. And then, out from behind the trees, seeming almost to float across the platform like a shining cloud, came a lovely little figure all in white and silver, gleaming and flashing from countless silver sequins, with a wonderful shining thing (it must be a crown) in

her golden hair. An "Oh" of admiration swept the hall. Sarah Ann, holding Juliana tightly to her breast, started to her feet. Her face was white with the shock of it.

"It's — *Her*," Sarah Ann gasped.

XIII

IT IS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL PLAN, BUT THE LADY
COP VETOES IT. LIFE IS VERY QUEER

THE Christmas Spirit, waiting for Richard to come for her, was curled up in a corner of the Lady Cop's big couch — the couch that Bobby and Juliana knew so well. She showed signs of wear — the inevitable price of a popular success; that is to say that she had lost many sequins from the white gown, and there was a gaping tear down the skirt. But her face was radiant.

"It was the time of my life," she declared. "The idea, Frances Armstrong, of your keeping all that to yourself and never letting me into it before, when you knew how I'd love it."

"It isn't always Christmas, you know," the Lady Cop reminded her. "They're not always eating turkey. Turkey! Child, if you *knew*! It's hard times, Eleanor Riverton. Do you know what hard times mean — and labour troubles? They're lucky if they get one meal a day."

"Well, they won't need one to-morrow, anyway," Eleanor retorted gaily. "I never in my life saw real eating before. Mercy, Frances, *how did they do it?*"

"You'd have to have weeks — years sometimes — of semi-starvation behind you, to understand."

Eleanor's eyes darkened. "What's gotten into you, Frances Armstrong!" she cried. "When I never had such a good time in my life to go and spoil it all! Why don't you let us — the kiddies and me both — enjoy this one?"

The Lady Cop, down in her big chair with her head resting wearily against its back, sat up suddenly.

"You're right, Eleanor," she cried. "I am a brute. Of course it's all the more reason for not shadowing the joy of their one perfect time. I don't see what made me act so; I guess I am a little tired with all that I see."

"You poor darling, I should think so! Frances Armstrong, I'm just going to abduct you bodily and give you one good rest — a frivolous rest — music, pictures, theatre, all the things you love! You needn't say anything for I'm going to

do it. You'll have to let me for my soul's sake — isn't my soul as worth being coaxed out as any of your children's down in the slums? "

It was a great plan — from Eleanor's point of view. The Lady Cop smiled to herself over it, but Eleanor did not see the smile. She had arranged everything to her satisfaction, giving herself a pleasure and "doing Frances good" at the same time, and she was as happy as a child who has discovered unsuspected nobleness in himself. So the matter being arranged — it never entered her mind that Frances might have other thoughts about it — she flew back to the evening and its glorious time.

"In all my life I know I'll never have such a compliment as the faces of those children!" she declared. "Of course, I know it was mostly my gown. Cicily was right: if you want to make an impression, wear shining things, Frances."

"I fancy I *should* make an impression if I did," Frances retorted with a laugh.

"And weren't they the funniest kiddies you ever saw! That scrawny little one with the cross-eyed baby, and the goldleaf pinned on for a breast-

pin, and the adorable small boy with his clothes half torn off him — what did you say her name was? Mary Jane?”

“Sarah Ann.”

“Mary Jane’s near enough. She looked it with those wisps of pigtail and that ages-old face. She could make an artist’s reputation ‘Mary Jane of Cherry Alley.’”

Frances Armstrong’s eyes lit suddenly. It was things like that in Eleanor that made one hope. *Did* she see, really? At any rate she would try it.

“Do you know,” she said quietly, “that for months you have been Sarah Ann’s ideal — her dream, the one who, more than anybody or anything else in the world, has helped her to fight her battles, and plan things for her children?”

“I?” The little white and silver figure nearly fell off the couch in her amazement. “I? Frances Armstrong, what in the world are you talking about? I never saw Sarah Ann in my life before.”

“Yes, you have. Once. On your wedding night — you gave her a white rose. She keeps it

in an old glove in a corner of her bureau drawer. She only told me about it once: it is too sacred to speak of."

The Lady Cop spoke slowly, but she thought rapidly. Should she tell her of Sarah Ann's dream for Juliana? No, she did not dare; she must grow far — the little spoiled sweet pea girl — to see the pathos of that. All this in a flash, before she heard the sweet pea girl herself, with a little break in her voice.

"I remember — that little ragged girl as I came down the steps. Oh, *Frances*, to think of her caring like that! It — it breaks you all up —"

Frances nodded, waiting.

It was only a moment. Even through the tears Eleanor's eyes began to shine.

"Frances Armstrong, I'm going to adopt her! Not at home, of course, but here, where she lives. She shall have things that will leave white roses nowhere. Oh, it will be fun!"

"No, you aren't, Eleanor Riverton. You are not going to rob Sarah Ann."

The Lady Cop's voice was gentle but very firm.

The sweet pea girl stared at her incredulously.

"Rob her! Frances Armstrong, what do you mean? I am talking about giving her things — anything she needs."

"No, you aren't. You haven't the faintest idea what Sarah Ann needs. You are planning to give yourself a new and exciting kind of pleasure. What Sarah Ann needs most of anything in the world, is what everybody else needs — a dream to grow up to. You gave her that without knowing it. And now you would take it away, and give her — *things* — that you could buy in any store!"

"Frances Armstrong what are you talking about?" The little white and silver girl was all drooping and bewildered and hurt. The Lady Cop crossed to the old couch and sat down beside her and cuddled her up as if she had been Sarah Ann herself.

"You poor baby! I seem terribly cruel, don't I? I am so sorry, dear. But you see, there's nothing in the world that needs so much experience and wisdom and patient un-wear-out-able love, as what you call helping people. You see, dear, to give Sarah Ann beautiful things as you

would love to, might do her all sorts of harm. Her father would pawn them, probably, and give up trying to get work. They wouldn't fit her home, or Cherry Alley. The other girls would be envious and make her life miserable. Worst of all, it might change Sarah Ann herself — destroy her splendid self-respect and courage. I didn't mean to hurt you, dear, but oh, it does stir me up so — the way people put blundering fingers into other people's lives! ”

Eleanor drew a long quivering breath. “ I feel about as big as a pinhead,” she said, trying to laugh (the little girl had spirit). “ I know what you're getting at — that I'd take Sarah Ann up, and then get tired of her and drop her. Maybe I should. But oh, Frances, aren't you going to let me do *anything*? Is,” she caught the argument up triumphantly, “ is Sarah Ann to have all the pleasure — isn't there a little bit somewhere for me? ”

The Lady Cop was thinking hard. “ You may give her,” she said slowly, “ this one Christmas. I will tell her that it only happens once in one's life, and then she will not be expecting it again.

You may go yourself and carry the things to her."

"Clothes and toys and candy and fruit, oh, and a pin! Frances — just one little pin! Maybe she would give me the goldleaf for a souvenir!"

"Not a pin, you baby. Didn't I tell you it would go to the pawn-shop? A string of ten-cent beads will make her just as happy. And clothes, plain serviceable ones; and shoes — they both need shoes. And candy if you must, and a toy or two for Bobby, but very little for Juliana because Sarah Ann would be jealous of anyone else giving Juliana more than she could."

"I suppose," Eleanor declared, "that is doing very well for you, but *I* think it's a very uninteresting Christmas. Couldn't I bring Sarah Ann a doll — wouldn't that be safe?"

"Child, child, *child!*" The Lady Cop was half laughing, half pitying. "Don't you know that the most beautiful doll in the world wouldn't touch Sarah Ann? A doll — when she has been a mother ever since she was five years old! She knows more of life in this minute than you have learned in twenty-three years. She *might* accept a soft one for Juliana."

Eleanor pouted, then laughed.

"Very well, I'll be around to-morrow night with the box for you to O. K. Might I be allowed to bring stockings, may I inquire?"

"You might. You might even, if you wanted to, bring a tiny tree — tiny, mind you. Remember that you don't know Sarah Ann's home. And if you want to give more pure unadulterated happiness than you ever gave in your life before, you will let Sarah Ann help you arrange things."

"But — I wanted to surprise her."

"More than you wanted to give her pleasure?"

"You're the worst tyrant I ever saw. I don't see how I put up with you at all. *Have* your old Sarah Ann help then!"

Eleanor was really being heroic, and Frances knew it. The light that made Sarah Ann think her the most beautiful person she ever saw except Her — transformed her tired face.

"It's so wonderful to think of one perfect thing happening in Cherry Alley, Eleanor Riverton," she cried. "I believe I am happier than Sarah Ann will be."

XIV

AND SARAH ANN MAKES THE GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT OF HER LIFE

IT was the day after the Tree and the day before Christmas; a difficult and disorganised day, as days after are apt to be; a day of quarrels and squabbles and recriminations and fights. Many a mother had cried that she wished them swells had never had no tree, if that's the way Jinny's goin' to act after it. Only Sarah Ann lived through it in a daze. She could not even talk to Juliana about it yet. Sarah Ann's staunch little heart, unflinching before all the blows of fate, was unacclimated to joy. To have seen Her again — looked into her face — received a gift from her hand! The gifts went hours ago, the candy to the children, the handkerchiefs (two — pink and violet bordered) one to Mrs. Mullony and one to Mrs. Heintzmuller. Let no one think Sarah Ann was generous — she knew better. In the glove, pressing against the withered rose, was

a shining sequin from Her dress. Sarah Ann's conscience wriggled when she remembered that she grabbed it from under Maggie Finegan's hand, but Sarah Ann quelled her conscience as if it had been Bobby.

"It belonged to *me!*" she declared stubbornly.

Bobby, at first incredulous, then shy and finally daring, lived a day of reckless bravado with consequences to his clothes which Sarah Ann, in that marvellous and unprecedented daze of hers, never saw at all. By late afternoon Bobby became worried. He never had heard the aphorism that the good die young, but he lived through the state of mind that produced it; he became distinctly alarmed about Sarah Ann. He had reason to know that "they" had reached the stage where Sarah Ann always put him to bed or arrayed him in the dark disgrace of an apron; yet, although he gave her abundant opportunity to observe the necessity for patches, even to the extent of walking around the room with his back to her, Sarah Ann never saw. Bobby's eyes finally filled with fear. He could stand it no longer.

"Tha'rann," he faltered.

Sarah Ann, brooding over Juliana, with the look upon her face as if she were in reality seeing a beautiful movie a thousand miles away, did not even hear.

"Tha'rann," he cried louder, and then, stamping angrily, "*Tha'rann!*"

Sarah Ann slowly came back.

"What's it, Bobby?" she asked mildly.

Bobby's alarm instantaneously vanished, in its place appearing the dread of the humiliation to be undergone while they were being mended. It was a transformation scene, with the stage a small boy's mind.

"I — nothin', Tha'rann. That wath good turkey, wathn't it, Tha'rann?"

"Lovely," Sarah Ann answered. And sounded as if she were singing.

At the unwonted sound, all Bobby's strange fear came surging back.

"Tha'rann," he cried, pounding on her knee. "*Tha'rann!*"

Sarah Ann merely looked at him this time — looked at him as if she were looking right through him to the wall beyond.

"Tha'rann." He was fairly whimpering now. And she never even told him not to bother. But she came a little bit nearer home.

"Tha'rann, I — I gueth I got a tear — jutht a little weeny tear, Tha'rann, not a fierthe one. Thee, Tha'rann? Thee how little it ith?"

Bobby exhibited.

Sarah Ann merely looked at it and said, "I'll mend it to-night, Bobby."

Bobby gave her one terrified glance, and then went out and sat on the stairs. Tim Murphy came by and gave him a punch and taunted him.

"Aw what's the matter with yer, Bobby Kilian? Yer sick — that's what's the matter!"

"Ain't neither!" Bobby retorted; but there was no conviction in his voice. He felt sick; at least, he didn't know what else could be the matter. For Sarah Ann to let a tear like that go when usually he would have been aproned for one a quarter of that size! The pillars of his world were falling about Bobby. It even affected his appetite (coming so close upon yesterday's turkey) and sent him early to bed, where he lay in a fever of anxiety, watching Sarah Ann walking dreamily

about washing her dishes and putting Juliana to bed. It was years before she reached the trousers; when she finally did, Bobby felt as if a great load was suddenly lifted from his mind, and, exhausted by the strain of the last few hours, he was asleep in five minutes, the last picture upon which his heavy lids closed, being that of Sarah Ann tied up in a knot (sewing was difficult for Sarah Ann, as her postures showed) feeding stitches into the big hole as if it were Juliana at her sweetest!

Gradually, as Sarah Ann sat there, the night noises began to fill the house. The night noises were different from the daytime ones — different and sadder. In the daytime was the clatter of children up and down the stairs, and women “neighbouring” and scolding, maybe; but the night sounds were those of men and women together, and the quarrelling was different. Sometimes Sarah Ann, used to it all as she was, shivered, and held Juliana close when she heard them. But this Christmas Eve when the noises were even more pitifully rough and quarrelsome than usual, Sarah Ann did not hear them at all. She was

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hearing instead the voice which at that moment was coming nearer and nearer —

Suddenly Sarah Ann's work slipped from her fingers and she trembled from head to foot. Up the stairs — Oh, she must be dreaming, yet it sounded *on the stairs*.

She was clinging dizzily to her chair when they reached her door — the Lady Cop, a strange young man and Her! They were all laden with bundles, and behind them pressed an excited crowd with whom the strange young man apparently transacted some business; at least, he distributed some silver, and the crowd, or most of it, retreated, and he shut the door. Of course you have a right to lock doors when you pay for the privilege, but he was not at all popular, none the less.

In the room — Sarah Ann's dingy house which she had tried so hard to put in order for Christmas — the Lady Cop was kneeling beside the child, while the sweet pea girl, shrinking and eager at the same time, was smiling at Sarah Ann, and Sarah Ann was seeing, feeling, hearing nothing except Her.

"Merry Christmas, Sarah Ann," she said.

Sarah Ann answered nothing; only timidly, her eyes fixed upon Her face, she put out one claw-like hand and touched the long fur coat in which she was sheathed.

"I believe," Eleanor declared, with a queer little note in her voice, "she thinks she's dreaming. Do you think you're dreaming, Sarah Ann?"

Sarah Ann nodded, still speechless.

"Frances Armstrong," Eleanor cried impatiently, "can't you make her talk?"

"Unwrap the Christmas tree," the Lady Cop directed. (She had insisted upon bringing it wrapped — she knew Cherry Alley.)

"Quick!" Eleanor ordered. "Quick, Richard. It's — it's too uncanny. I'll fly if she doesn't speak!"

The young man unrolled a long bundle and out came something swathed and tied like a huge fragrant green cocoon; he cut the cords, and branch after branch sprang into freedom till it stood a perfect tiny tree, reaching beautiful green arms for its burdens. Another bundle yielded a green standard; a moment, and the beautiful

forest thing stood erect and strong in the dingy room.

Still Sarah Ann said no word.

"It's a spell," the sweet pea girl declared, in whimsical despair. "Richard, what kind of a prince are you if you can't break spells?"

"Show her," the Lady Cop said softly, "Juliana's socks."

Eleanor began tossing bundles from the big basket. She found them at last — a box of tiny socks. Two, just to hang up, would have been enough, but the sweet pea girl didn't know how to do things that way. She opened the box, and put a pair of the tiny soft white things in Sarah Ann's hand. The Lady Cop was right. Sarah Ann quivered and drew a long breath.

"Juliana's asleep," she said. "I'll go get her."

But the Lady Cop held her. "I wouldn't wake Juliana, dear. Juliana is too little to understand, and she ought to sleep. You don't want to wake little babies for anything, you know. Bye and bye when she is bigger, Juliana will have her special Christmas, but just this year it is yours, Sarah

Ann — your very special one for all your life. And She is waiting, dear, for you to help her trim the tree and fill the stockings for Bobby and Juliana ——”

Even then it took time to make her understand, but when at last she did!

The tree first. There could be no candles because it wasn't allowed, but Sarah Ann knew nothing of candles. There were marvellous shining balls of silver and gold and blue and green that reflected tiny glorified rooms on their fairy-like mirrors; there were glass things like icicles, and silvery stuff like frost, and a powder that looked like snow. And Sarah Ann helped! She tied on some of the bells and sprinkled snow powder on the branches, and festooned the long shiny silver threads. Then she stood and looked.

“Don't you like it, Sarah Ann?” the Lady Cop cried. Sarah Ann drew a long breath — so long that it seemed as if she must have drawn out all the air in her small body.

“It — it looks like — *Her* — in her veil,” she said shyly.

The sweet pea girl flushed exquisitely.



*She found them at last—a box
of tiny socks*

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"It's the prettiest thing anybody ever said of me," she cried. And across Sarah Ann's head her eyes sought her husband's. She had forgotten — such was the power of Christmas and Sarah Ann — that her marriage was a failure, and that she was very very unhappy!

There was more to follow. Stockings. And after all, in spite of the wonder of the tree, stockings were — well, of course, they were different, you couldn't compare them; only stockings get hold of your heart so! Sarah Ann patted Bobby's but she kissed Juliana's ecstatically. And she insisted upon examining every one of their presents, which of course, is quite proper for mothers; you can't have people giving your children things and not know what they are.

"But not that, Sarah Ann," the sweet pea girl cried, "— that's for you, and not to be touched till to-morrow."

Sarah Ann pushed it aside. As if she cared anything about presents for herself when she had the glorious joy of filling stockings for Juliana and Bobby! Suddenly, in the midst of the joy, a terrible fear stabbed her and her hand faltered.



"I — I got Bobby a ball and a'nall-day-sucker," she said.

They understood at once.

"That's lovely, Sarah Ann. You can put one in each stocking, right on the very top where Bobby will find them first of all."

"And Juliana's cap with pink ribbons," she cried still more jealously.

"The cap with pink ribbons — bring it, Sarah Ann. What a pretty little cap! And why not put it right over Juliana's little socks like that!"

"She'll like it best," Sarah Ann insisted.

"Of course she will, Sarah Ann."

But when Juliana's cap was put on the shelf over the stockings (did I say that the stockings had to be hung to the lowest shelf where the dishes were, because Cherry Alley architects had somehow failed to make provision for Christmas in their planning?) with a piece of clean paper under it, as a sort of extra insurance against being soiled, Sarah Ann stood very still looking at it all, and her face was so serious that the three watching knew that something was not right.

"Don't you like it, Sarah Ann?" the Lady Cop

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cried, and in spite of her understanding, there was a shadow of reproach in her voice. It was so inconceivable that Sarah Ann shouldn't be happy.

Sarah Ann looked slowly from the stockings to the little waiting group. In her eyes, although they did not see it yet, was a great renunciation.

"I — I guess — Juliana'll like *her* things best," she cried in a low voice.

So Sarah Ann, little untaught mother of the tenements, reached the very heart of Christmas, which is the giving of the dearest that one has, even as God Himself gave two thousand years ago.

There were but a few minutes more — dizzy moments which Sarah Ann could not clearly recall afterwards, and then the vision was gone, and Sarah Ann was alone in a still room with the shining little tree and the lumpy stockings and her memories. Sarah Ann listened till she heard the last faint note of Her voice down the dingy stairs; then she shut and locked her door and put out the light. Sarah Ann knew her world — nothing less could ensure the safety of the tree till morning. Even as it was, there were many footsteps and



numerous uncomplimentary remarks outside the door; Cherry Alley takes nothing so hard as being denied the satisfaction of its curiosity.

Sarah Ann listening inside, gave them — though mutely — as good as they gave. But underneath, a dull fear assailed her soul; not of the neighbours — she felt herself fully competent to deal with them — but of her father; if he should come home drunk and — do things! It was a contingency that could not be ignored, and Sarah Ann, in the dark, thought it all out; she would not let him in, even though she paid heavily on the morrow, she would not let him in. Juliana and Bobby should have their Christmas at any cost.

For one hour — two — she had sat there in the dark with her heart in her mouth, when a man's step came up the stairs and stopped at the door (all the other visitors had been women and children), but the next moment at the sound of Jake Peters' voice, she ran eagerly to the door. Jake was a friend to be trusted, his low standards in the matter of blueing notwithstanding. Sarah Ann unlocked the door and opened it a crack.

"Slip in quick," she admonished, and Jake

who was light and small, obeyed her curiously.

"What's up, kid?" he asked. "Ain't bein' chased by robbers, are you?"

"Pretty near," Sarah Ann responded. "Wait till I stick a wad of paper under the door so they won't see the light."

Jake waited. Sarah Ann did the job thoroughly, and then, with trembling hands, lit the gas and the shining tree seemed to step softly from the darkness. Jake gave a long whistle.

"Looks like you've got friends, Sarah Ann — what?"

Sarah Ann nodded. "A — a friend of the Lady Cop's. They came to-night — that's why I locked the door. And oh, Jake, I'm so scairt Pop will come home drunk!"

It was Jake's turn to nod. There are many things that Cherry Alley understands without words.

"I get yer. 'Twould be fierce. But it's after eleven, kid. It looks like you're safe fer the night. 'Fanything happens, call me."

"I — I thought I'd put the table 'gainst the door," Sarah Ann suggested timidly.

Again Jake understood. Sarah Ann was, in reality, barricading her heart against fear.

"Good idee, kid. 'N then you turn in — yer hear?"

"I — I guess I will," Sarah Ann replied, greatly comforted. "You knock three times, an' then I'll know you'll know I've fixed it."


"Sure thing," Jake promised.

So Jake went out and listened, grinning, while Sarah Ann locked the door and put the table against it, and then he rapped three times and she rapped back, after which, the burden of fear lifted, Sarah Ann went to bed. But she did very little sleeping, for which, after all, she was not to be pitied. Sleep is for ordinary nights, not for those in which miracles happen. And if, three times she got up and went into the other room and knelt down by the tree, sniffing its forest fragrance, and then went over to the shelf and felt the lumpy things that were stockings full of Christmas, why, that too was a joy for which a day or two of weariness was so small a price to pay that the transaction might well pass for one of the notable bargains of life.

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Towards morning however, Sarah Ann really did fall asleep, but only for a couple of hours. When she awoke it was still dark; it was certainly the longest night that was ever lived. Sarah Ann crept out to the kitchen and struck a match and held it before the alarm clock lying on its side and ticking raucously. The computation always necessary in dealing with Sarah Ann's timepiece, revealed the fact that it was ten minutes of six. For the thing that Sarah Ann did next, I have no excuse to offer. She knew that it was wrong — had not the Lady Cop only the night before, said that babies ought not to be waked? Yet notwithstanding this, Sarah Ann, in the middle of the room, announced her decision. "*I'm going to wake them up.*" And she did it.

She should have suffered for it — Juliana should have made her suffer. But Juliana dealt out punishment upon some esoteric method of her own, and, wakened out of sleep and carried into the other room before daylight, she merely stared and stared at the shining silver balls on the tree, as if they hypnotised her. But Bobby was not hypnotised. Yesterday and its strange terrors



were as if they had never been, and Bobby, overwhelmed with excitement, appeared to be half a dozen small boys at once, each of them, however, using but a single leg at a time. Through some quality in Bobby's make-up, supreme excitement could be expressed only upon one leg. Sometimes he merely hung on to the superfluous one when he looked like a plump and shabby stork; but usually he hopped. He hopped this morning; moreover he filled the air with shrill whoops, Sarah Ann, her own voice hoarse with the tension of the night, warning him against waking the neighbours.

"Tha'rann, ith it our'n? Ith it our'n, Tha'rann? Oh, Tha'rann, when did it come? Can I touch 'em, Tha'rann? Oh, Tha'rann, can I?"

Sarah Ann grabbed hastily for one of Bobby's stockings and snatched the all-day-sucker from the top of it, thrusting the sucker into his mouth, and the fat lumpy stocking into his hands, in one sweeping gesture. Bobby accepted both with instant comprehension, and then, at last, the sucker having stopped up his flow of questions, Sarah Ann drew a breath of relief and settled down to the ecstasy of the hour.

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Bobby first; upon the principle of the best for the last; at least, that was what Sarah Ann meant to do, but before Bobby was through his first stocking, Sarah Ann was casting wistful glances at Juliana's part of the shelf, and before he had dug the last thing out of the toe, she surrendered ignominiously and rushed for the cap.

"Oh, you *darling*," Sarah Ann cried rapturously, "you do look the beautifullest! Do you like it, darlingest? Did you know your Sarah Ann gave it to you?"

Juliana sampled a bit of the pink ribbon that fell across her lips, thought poorly of it and rejected it, but without any ill-feeling. She even looked as if she contemplated the possibility of smiling, although she decided against it, upon the ground, probably, that it would encourage her slave too much. But Sarah Ann had seen the possibility, and hugged her in a transport of happiness, which she had to stop in the middle in order to make a dive at Bobby who was trying to make room for a handful of newly-discovered candy without giving up the sucker.

"Bobby, you put that other down! Give it

to me this minute. You'll choke yourself, an' then where'd you be?"

"Ain't neither," Bobby retorted thickly.

"You will — you'll ache somethin' fierce, an' be so sick you won't want to *see* candy. I'm goin' to keep it for you an' give it to you some at a time. there ain't no use fightin' — *I'm goin' to do it.*"

There was no use fighting — Sarah Ann's statements were irrefutable.

Bobby capitulated, muttering conditions and entreaties. Finding Sarah Ann adamant, he fell back upon a crawling beetle that you wound up by a key in its stomach; of this fearful beast Sarah Ann evinced proper terror.

"I'll thcare 'em all!" Bobby shouted — a sort of muted shout. "I'll thcare Jinny. I'll thcare Jo. I'll thcare everybody. Ain't you thcared, Tha'rann?"

"Awful," Sarah Ann rejoined absently, engrossed in making Juliana open her packages, which she did by proxy, allowing — so amiable was her mood — her slave to put one of her limp hands upon each in turn, and dangle them before her eyes, bump them against her nose, and do

other things which Juliana clearly deemed childish, and quite beneath her notice.

But Sarah Ann! Sarah Ann was in transports of joy. Bibs and mittens and some little dresses and a rag doll, and, loveliest of all, three tiny pink sachets to tuck in the drawer where Juliana's things were kept. Sarah Ann rocked in ecstasy. Metaphorically, at least, she stood on one foot like Bobby.

Bobby meanwhile, having explored his second stocking, was attacking Sarah Ann's, opening a long thin box that stuck out of the top of the nearest one. Then Bobby received a blow.

"*Beath!*" he exclaimed in disgust.

Sarah Ann, who was trying on Juliana's mittens, looked up in surprise, and then made a grab.

"Where did you get those, Bobby?"

"There," Bobby indicated carelessly.

"Why, they're *mine*. They must be!" Incredible as it seems, Sarah Ann had not once thought of her stockings, not even that she had any stockings. She eyed the beads — cheap ones enough, but a lovely colour — with shining eyes.

"If I'd only had 'em yesterday!" she cried,

but the cry was instantly followed by another and a joyous one.

"They'll be so lovely for Juliana when she's a Bride! I'll jest wear 'em oncet or twicet, darlingest — maybe not even oncet. I'll save 'em for you the *carefulest!* Oh, *Juliana!*"


The beads were only the beginning. There were other things, marvellous, incredible things — hair ribbons (wider than Rosie Finn's), and shoes and stockings and, in a big box on the floor, a dress and coat and hat. Sarah Ann sat dumb with amazement. No princess in a fairy-tale, with her robe of moonbeams, could have felt more richly endowed. And all from *Her*.

There followed a morning when Sarah Ann received. The first caller arrived at breakfast time, and beheld the tree and those of the gifts which Sarah Ann thought good to display. The news spread with such incredible rapidity that the only plausible explanation was, that it escaped through the walls. People came from blocks away, admiring, envious, congratulatory, according to their dispositions, but all aware of the glory the tree

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reflected upon the Alley. Sarah Ann, it is regrettable to relate, became puffed up and even condescending. Juliana was nobler, in that her attitude towards the world seemed no whit changed by this sudden fortune: she seemed, if anything, to scorn it, refusing to notice her doll.

All this glory came to a sudden and untimely end. The middle of the morning there were heavy stumbling steps on the stairs, and Pop lurched into the room — poor Pop, unknowing that help was on the way and celebrating in the only pitiful fashion he knew. He stood in the doorway staring at the crowd for a moment with blinking eyes, then, swearing violently, drove them all out, flung Sarah Ann's tree after them, and threw himself down on the bed, where he fell immediately into heavy sleep. Bobby sobbing with fright, had slipped behind the door. Sarah Ann rescued him as soon as it was safe and sent him out to play. Sarah Ann's face was stern, but she did not cry. She was a philosopher in her small way. You couldn't expect things to last, and she had had her hour.



There was a soft knock at the door.

"Sar' Ann, darlint —" Mrs. Mullony called cautiously.

Sarah Ann opened the door and Mrs. Mullony peered in over her head.

"Is himsilf asleep?" she asked.

Sarah Ann nodded. Mrs. Mullony stepped inside. "Sure it's grand pluck ye have, Sar' Ann," she declared, "an' I've saved ye what I c'd. The tree's all right, barrin' one branch that got broken, an' there's a few of thim shiny balls an' all the stringy stuff. It's a foine sight if ye don't think of what it was."

Sarah Ann shook her head.

"It's real kind of you, Mrs. Mullony, but I guess I'd rather not see it."

Mrs. Mullony eyed her curiously.

"There's toimes when ye beat me, Sar' Ann, an' that's the truth, but if you don't you don't, an' that's the one word to be said. An' me makin' all them spalpeens hand over the fixin's they'd grabbed —"

Sarah Ann quivered. "I — I guess I'd rather

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not think about it, Mrs. Mullony. But if you wouldn't mind keepin' some things for me — Bobby's shoes an' mine, an' some clothes."

Mrs. Mullony was instantly satisfied and full of curiosity.

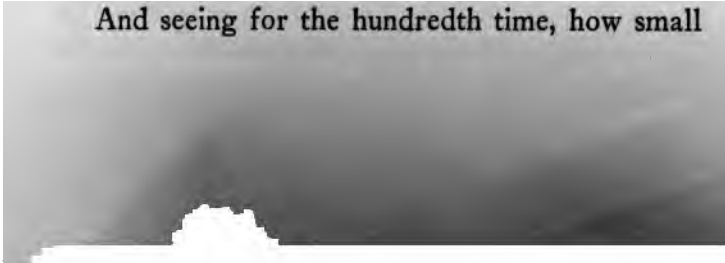
"The blissid saints! Ye don't say there was clothes too, Sar' Ann! Well, if you ain't the luckiest. An' f'r Juliana too?"

Sarah Ann nodded. "But she likes my cap the best," she cried as she had before.

"Av course she does, the crathur! What f'r wouldn't she? An' I'll bet a bushel of pertaters it's Juliana that's brought ye the luck. Them kind" (Mrs. Mullony did not specify the kind) "allus do. Bring the things along, Sar' Ann. It's kapin' thim from him, ye're manin'. An' it's a long head ye've got on thim mites of shoulthers o' your'n, an' that's a fact."

They both spoke of Pop's drunkenness as a matter of fact. Cherry Alley accepted life as it came, and called things by their names in a way that simplified many complexities.

And seeing for the hundredth time, how small



Sarah Ann was to be carrying woman-size burdens, warm-hearted Mrs. Mullony's brief indignation passed like morning mist.

"Yer'll find me handy any time ye're wantin' a mite o' help, Sar' Ann," she said, as she took her departure.

It was afternoon, however, before Sarah Ann got down with her clothes. Pop in his brief passage, had contrived to do a disheartening amount of damage, and that had to be set right as far as possible: and of course, there were Juliana's demands, and Bobby came back long enough to demand breakfast which Sarah Ann furnished in the unique combination of bread, bologna and candy in equal parts: and Bobby, being young and strong, survived. Sarah Ann herself merely took a bit of bread on the fly. Sarah Ann often considered eating in the light of an interruption to living. This doubtless, although she did not realise it, and the Lady Cop did not know, had something to do with her gravity when she reached her friend's late in the afternoon. The Lady Cop was disappointed — she had expected such a radiant Sarah Ann.

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"What did Bobby say when he saw the tree, Sarah Ann? And," with a sudden recollection of the danger of omissions—"and Juliana? Did they like it?"

"Juliana thought it was beautiful," Sarah Ann responded, "and Bobby made such a racket I had to give him the all-day-sucker the first thing. I guess it wasn't light — not *really* light — when we got up."

The Lady Cop smiled. That was more like it.

"And you had visitors, I expect?" she asked.


"Slues of 'em," Sarah Ann replied. "Then Pop came and threw it down stairs."

"Threw — you mean the *tree*, Sarah Ann?"

"Yes'm. He was full. He knocked 'round the room an' made an awful mess. They do, you know."

"But Sarah Ann — your *tree*!"

"Yes'm. He was full. Mis' Mullony got it an' fixed it up again, but I didn't want to see it. Most of the shiny things got broken, you know. But," across Sarah Ann's grave face came a gleam of glory — "*but I ain't ever goin' to forget — not ever.*"



The Lady Cop sat looking at her, a great weariness upon her own face. She longed to gather Sarah Ann up in her arms and cry over her, but she knew by signs that she had learned to understand, that this was not the time. Sarah Ann had, apparently, something else upon her mind.

Sarah Ann herself was looking down at Juliana — a strange look. It baffled her friend, who waited humbly.

At last Sarah Ann looked up, and the light in her eyes was so beautiful that the Lady Cop caught her breath. It was such a light as comes only after a mortal struggle.

"You said," Sarah Ann faltered, "that I'd have to show Juliana how to grow up like *Her*."

"Yes," the Lady Cop answered, waiting.

"An'— an'— She — went to school?"

"Yes, indeed. For a great many years. I knew her first at school."

"There ain't," Sarah Ann questioned wistfully, "no other way?"

The Lady Cop felt her own voice shaking. She saw it now — that little fighting soldier-soul!

And she must not fail her, no matter how hard it was.

"No, dear, there isn't any other way. Nobody could possibly grow up to be like Her, or teach anybody else to be like Her, without going to school. There isn't any other way to learn things, Sarah Ann."

Sarah Ann sat still, but the Lady Cop watching, saw her arms tighten about Juliana. It seemed to her that her room was full of shadowy watchers. The light went out, and in its place came such a look of agony that she had to turn her face away. So she sat, fighting with the child; and finally, after what seemed infinite ages, Sarah Ann's weak voice called her.

"Then — if there ain't no other way — I — I'll put Juliana — *there* — an' go to school."

The Lady Cop went swiftly into the other room. How glad she was now, for the trip she had taken that morning when she had felt too tired to stir! She came back with something which she put into Sarah Ann's hand. It was a photograph of Her in her wedding gown and veil — her lovely eyes smiling straight into Sarah Ann's.

The child looked at it — not saying one word. And then the Lady Cop made her sacrifice.

"She sent it to you, dear — for you to keep always, to help you when it's hard."

It was not Sarah Ann's face alone then — her whole meagre little body seemed transfigured into the very spirit of wonder and joy.

"*Oh!*" she breathed in a very passion of worship. Then she looked up into the Lady Cop's face.

"I think Juliana looks like Her already," she cried.

THE END

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